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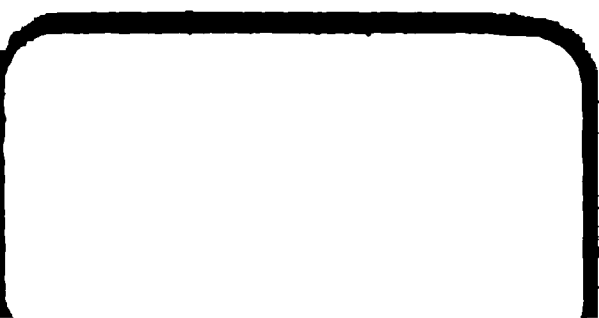
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1885.





# IN THE HEBRIDES

BY

C. F. GORDON CUMMING

AUTHOR OF "AT HOME IN FIJI," "A LADY'S CRUISE IN A FRENCH MAN-OF-WAR"  
"FIRE FOUNTAINS"

"From the dim shieling on the misty Island  
Mountains divide us, and a world of seas;  
But still our hearts are true—our hearts are Highland,  
And we, in dreams, behold the Hebrides."

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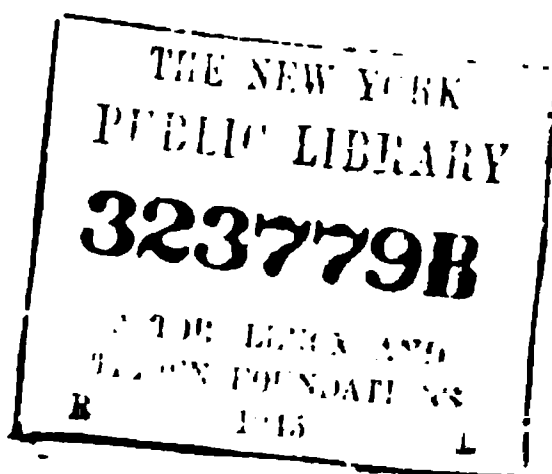
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1883

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EN



## INTRODUCTION.

THE dreamy summer in the Western Isles which furnished the notes for the following pages, was immediately succeeded by a prolonged spell of most delightful wanderings in the Himalayas.

On this,—my first journey to the Far East,—my attention was forcibly arrested by many very striking analogies between many of the customs and legends of Western Islanders, and those of Eastern Highlanders.

These, again, suggested such a multitude of unaccountable links between various semi-obsolete customs in Christian lands of the West (which are undoubtedly survivals of ancient pagan practice), and those which form part of the daily religious life in Eastern lands,—that my volumes attained dimensions somewhat forbidding to general readers.

I have therefore deemed it expedient to select such notes of my summer in the Hebrides, as appear to me to possess most general interest, omitting all dryer matter.

These notes I now offer to all my kindred-wanderers on our own romantic Western shores and Isles, trusting that they may therein find some suggestions which may add interest to their own summer rambles.

C. F. GORDON CUMMING.



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## ERRATA.

p. 68, last line, *omit* Deisul, i. e. Sunwise

p. 69, line 2, *read* built it after the Deluge, *but he reversed the course of circuit.*

p. 69, line 21, *for* and is described *read* but has also been described by travellers as

p. 70, line 2, *omit* sunwise

Burton, in his pilgrimage to Mecca, states that the Moslem circuit of circumambulation is *widdershin*, i. e. from left to right—the left shoulder being turned towards the sacred object, whereas the Hindoo and other nations, making a *sunwise* turn, keep the right shoulder toward the sacred object. This statement is corroborated by pilgrims to Moslem shrines in other lands.

### “SUNDAY WAR.”

p. 204, *add after line 8*—The ten men who were apprehended were carried to Edinburgh for trial, and were found guilty of mobbing and rioting, but were recommended by the jury to the utmost leniency of the Court in consideration of their ignorance of law, their habitual good character, and their strong conviction that they were acting in defence of a religious obligation. The offence was, however, held to be of such gravity that they were sentenced by the Lord Chief Justice to four months' imprisonment.

# IN THE HEBRIDES.

## CHAPTER I.

"THE beautiful Isles of Greece  
Full many a bard has sung :  
The Isles I love best lie far in the West,  
Where men speak the Gaelic tongue.

"Let them sing of the sunny South,  
Where the blue *Ægean* smiles,  
But give to me the Scottish sea,  
That breaks round the Western Isles !

"Lovest thou mountains great,  
Peaks to the clouds that soar,  
Corrie and fell where eagles dwell,  
And cataracts dash evermore ?

"Lovest thou green grassy glades,  
By the sunshine sweetly kist,  
Murmuring waves, and echoing caves ?  
Then go to the Isle of Mist !" —SHERIFF NICHOLSON.

The Mull of Cantyre — Campbelton—The Scot-Dalriads — Kil-Kerran — Churches of early Saints—St. Colomba in Cantyre at Kil-Colm-Keil—The Ocean—Cantyre's Dairy Farms—The Monastery of Saddell—Legend of Dunaverty—Kil-Cousland — St. Couslan's Weddings — Kil-Kerran — St. Coivin's Divorces—Macnahanish Bay—Kelp-Burners.

It was on a lovely morning in the early spring that we started for the West Coast, without any very definite intention as to where we might drift. Our only plan was to spend some quiet weeks

in the most out-of-the-world place we could find; one where my pencil might keep me busy, while my brother could rejoice in perfect idleness after a course of hard reading; and what spot more suitable than the Land's End of Scotland, the dear bluff old Mull of Cantyre, which had already given us so many pleasant days?—that strange peninsula, in form like an outstretched finger, about forty miles in length, by an average of six in width, extending from the south of Argyleshire, as a mighty breakwater, for the protection of the mainland from the sweeping of Atlantic storms.

So we started, but without reference to our neighbours, and soon found to our cost that they were keeping holy-day, or holiday, as the case might be. It was a Sacramental Fast—very solemn to one section of the community, but a very “fast” day to the majority. Thus it came to pass that every station was crowded, and the line blocked with extra trains, and hours before we reached Greenock, our steamer had quietly sailed down the Clyde. So far as we were concerned, we had good reason to rejoice in the delay, as it enabled us to test the unfailing hospitality of one of our truest and oldest friends,—but I fear that to some of our fellow-travellers, the delay must have proved a serious inconvenience.

The third morning found us under way, and by midday we were watching the changing lights on the Isle of Arran, or Ar-rinn—“the land of sharp pinnacles” most rightly named. Dark shadows were drifting over the granite peaks of Goatfell, and those of Ben Ghoil, the “mountain of the wind,” which seemed to tower so high above the mist, though their actual height is only about 2,875 feet.

Here and there were little clusters of tiny brown huts, nestling in the shadow of the great hills, and human beings with collie dogs and flocks of sheep moved to and fro, like atoms scarcely visible.

As we passed gloomy Loch Ranza, with its dark encircling mountains and old ruined castle (once a royal hunting-seat), our attention was called to the boats of the oyster-dredgers; and we marvelled whether the oysters of Loch Ranza have the same ear for music as their brethren in the Firth of Forth, who require a continuous dredging-song to lull them to their doom, so that the wily fishers must perforce keep up an incessant monotonous chaunt,

in which all their conversation must be carried on. Various collectors of old ballads have from time to time gone out for a night with the dredgers, hoping to add new songs to their store, but all agree in saying that the same words never occur twice unchanged; and so they only gain the bitter cold of a night in an open boat in one of the months "with an R," which you perceive excludes all the bonnie summer nights. One allusion to this graceful fancy is found in a charming ballad which begins:—

"The herring loves the merry moonlight,  
The mackerel loves the wind,  
But the oyster loves the dredging song,  
For he comes of a gentle kind."

Several prominent head-lands were pointed out to me, in the course of the day, as the sites of so-called Vitrified Forts—strange relics of the past, concerning which nothing is known certainly. Among the many theories which have been propounded, none has for me such fascination as that which assumes them to have originally been Fire-Temples, the altars of Bel, the Celtic Baal, or Sun-god.

These vitrified circular masses are generally placed on some commanding height, often too near together to have been used as beacon lights. The stones are fused into glassy masses, the inside more perfectly vitrified than the outside, as would naturally be the case, if these raging fiery furnaces were the altars, where fire burnt day and night, and where animals and perhaps human sacrifices were offered, at the great Baal festivals. We know that long after Christianity was introduced in Britain, the fire-worship was continued; the land remaining in a strange twilight state, halting between two opinions—the grossness of heathen darkness, mitigated indeed by Christianity, but still very far from the light of perfect day; the people in general, having some leaning to the new faith, but a strong hold on the old idolatries.

The golden sunset fell on Ailsa Craig, and the bold headland of Davaar, as we entered the fine land-locked harbour of Campbelton, wherein lay many fishing-boats of all sizes, with rich brown sails.

I bethought me of old Pennant's account of this crowded harbour, where in the last century so many as two hundred and sixty "busses" might be seen at once. I fear that the Cockney mind, picturing a 'bus of the present day, would be somewhat disappointed to find so very dull a little town !

Campbelton is chiefly remarkable for the amazing fact that it is the means of annually contributing *more than one million sterling* to the Inland Revenue, in form of whisky duty !! That is to say, the distilleries of Campbelton and its immediate neighbourhood collectively produce upwards of 2,657,000 gallons per annum, and whisky-duty is ten shillings per gallon. Of the great sum thus represented £705,560 was actually paid to the Collector of Inland Revenue at Campbelton in the year ending March 1883. The surplus, being shipped under bond, is not included in the local payments. However, whether exported to Glasgow or elsewhere, Campbelton is responsible for the manufacture of this enormous amount of Fire-Water ! What a field for the beneficent Blue Ribbon Army, and how justly might they plead that this vast amount of barley should go to feed the thousands, now on the verge of starvation, throughout our own North-West !

The whiskies of Campbelton, like those of Lagavulin and Talisker (which are two celebrated distilleries on Islay and Skye), have at least the merit of being accounted first-class ; and the distillers give so good a price for barley that there is no longer any inducement for the Highlanders to deal with the smugglers, who in very recent times had stills for mountain-dew, all over this part of the country—so extensive a seaboard affording good scope for their trade. The Hebrideans crossed from the Isles, to Rhunahourine (the Heron's Point), thence marching across the hills to Skipness in bands of thirty or forty armed men, whose rough shelties were laden with heavy creels containing the moonlight produce, which was then sent to Glasgow.

The "stream in the moonlight which kings dinna ken" has not, however, wholly ceased to flow, and I have heard of sundry mysterious presents of kegs of "the crathur," very superior in quality to any that is to be procured from the large stills. And although

the men of Skye seem to have given up this illicit business, there are still many quiet nooks in the dark glens of Western Ross, where it is carried on in secrecy and comparative safety, in snug caves, or deep hollows, near some rippling stream.

Many such romantic spots, long since deserted, do I know in the wilds of Banffshire, where, in the heart of the dark fir woods, amid richest purple heather, you may note in one place a circle of white-stemmed birches, in another a fringe of golden broom and tangled wild roses clustering round a deep circular cup, where once the stills, worms and mash-tubs were concealed, and the mountain dew was distilled, but where now the greenest and richest ferns nestle in the cool shade, while wood-doves murmur on every side—pleasant play-grounds for children on bright summer days.

Old songs are not yet forgotten, whose gleeful point lay in telling how “The Deil ran awa’ wi’ the exciseman,” and that official is still an unwelcome visitor in certain remote corners of the land; but the days are gone by, when the wild Skipness men thought it all fair play to fight their battles with a revenue cutter, and, having overpowered her crew, to turn them all adrift again, without oars or tackle, to be tossed at the mercy of the waves!

To return to Campbelton, or as it was anciently called, Dalruadhein. Remote as it now seems to us, there was a time when it was the centre of Scottish life, and for upwards of three centuries it was, in fact, the capital of Scotland. This continued till the reign of Kenneth II., King of the Scots, who, having finally subdued the Picts, and merged both races in one kingdom, selected Forteviot, in Perthshire, as a more suitable capital.

These Dalriads seem to have come over from Ireland about the year 502 A.D., and to have founded that kingdom known in Scottish history as Alba; their power and numbers must have increased rapidly, for not long afterwards, we hear how the King of Alba invaded Ireland and fought the great battle of Moyra, famous in old song. In fact, these Scot-Dalriads held their place as a strong Celtic race, till the Norsemen overran the land, and moulded existing institutions to suit their own convenience. In later days James IV. here held a Parliament, as “Parliament Close” still attests.

There were, however, certain turbulent chiefs who would by no means render obedience to his laws ; more especially one Macdonald, whose castle of Cean Loch stood on the very spot now occupied by the large Castle-hill Church. In order to keep this man in check, James V. came here in person, and repaired the old fort of Kil-Kerran, leaving in it such a garrison as might overawe all rebellious subjects. But before the King had got clear of the harbour, Macdonald sallied out of his castle, took possession of the fortalice, and, in the sight of the King, hanged the new governor from the walls.

This old castle of Kil-Kerran stood about a mile from Campbelton. A very large old burial-ground, close by, still marks the spot where St. Kieran, the Apostle of Cantyre, first taught the people. The cave in which he lived, the Cove a Kieran, lies among the rocks so close to the sea, that you cannot enter it at high water. At all times it is a difficult, slippery scramble. Once there, you find a fine cave, with a dripping well, filling with clear, sparkling water a rock basin, whence the Saint drank. And beside it, on a great stone, is a rudely-sculptured cross, where, in the solitude of this grand wild temple, guarded from all human intruders by that barrier of mighty waters, he might worship his God undisturbed. Of his church, once the most important in Cantyre, little, if any, trace now remains ; but two shafts of broken crosses, carved with galleys, figures and arabesques, are among the very ancient stones in the old kirkyard.

While speaking of saintly names associated with this town, I cannot forbear to remind you of one, the mention of whose birth-place cannot fail to recall to multitudes (and assuredly to every Scotchman, of whatever denomination) the name of the great, and good, and genial Norman Macleod—a teacher as influential and beloved, and one as unsparing of his work, as the mightiest of those Celtic Fathers ; one who needs no canonization at the hands of earthly Councils to rivet his hold on the affections, and his influence on the life, of multitudes, even of those who were never privileged to hear his voice, but who, nevertheless, were followed to the uttermost ends of the earth by his good and loving words—so tender, and yet so strong and invigorating—learning from him year by



year something of deeper reverence for things human and divine, and perchance catching from his large-hearted liberality, something of a broader and more glowing charity, such as would fain enfold the whole great world in its own boundless love. Truly, were it only for having given birth to one such son as he, Cantyre may henceforth claim to be not least among the provinces of Scotland.

In the market-place of Campbelton there stands a very fine cross of hard blue whinstone, covered with well-carved figures, foliage, and runic knots, and bearing an inscription,—but whether this is Saxon or Lombardic is still disputed. It is supposed to have been brought over from Iona, where at one time there stood 360 stone crosses. These, the Synod of Argyle, in A.D. 1560, pronounced to be “monuments of idolatrie,” and commanded that they should be thrown into the sea. Some, however, were rescued, and taken to old churchyards and market-places in the neighbouring islands, or on the mainland. They are all very similar, being monoliths, generally of whinstone, and covered with elaborate designs.

The most casual traveller in Argyleshire cannot fail to be struck by the number of little roofless, fern-fringed, chapels, distinguished by the prefix of *kil* or *cell*, marking the spot as that where some early preacher of the Cross established himself, perhaps in yet heathen days. Such are Kil-Choman, Kil-Michael, Kilcoinan, Kilkeran, Kilcoivan, Kilkevan, Kilcousland, Kilraven, Killdavic, Kileolan, Kill-blaan, Kil-ewen, Killean, Kil-Kenzie, where the graves are irregularly scattered in picturesque confusion among sandhills or grassy knolls. Most of these have some carved stones—sometimes knights, sometimes ladies, always swords.

On some we find the galley of the Isles; on others deer-hunts, hounds, otters, creatures like griffins with wonderful tails of scroll-work, winding about in intricate patterns of foliage or other tracery; sometimes birds fighting; sometimes shears or other implements of work. All, or almost all, are alike nameless, covering the dust of long-forgotten heroes. Some have niches, in which lie sculptured effigies of bishops, with their pastoral crooks and mitres, or else knights with broadsword and battle-axe. Many have one or more of those round-headed, upright crosses, which we identify with Iona,

almost all of a grey whinstone—a hard stone, not much affected by centuries of wind and storm. Some have inscriptions in the Saxon character, unintelligible to the unlearned.

Some of the sculptures in the best preservation, are in the chapel of St. Cormac, at Kiels, in North Knapdale (north of Cantyre), where there are an unusual number of such memorials. Indeed throughout Knapdale, such links to the past are especially abundant, and such spots as Kil-Michael Lussa, Kiels, and Kilmory, by turns invite attention.

Some very interesting remains are to be seen on the Eilan More, a little isle at the entrance to Loch Killisport. Here there is a small chapel, and a vaulted chamber, divided into two cells, one of which was apparently the dwelling-place of the hermit. In the other is a stone coffin, supported by four grotesque figures. On the lid is the figure of a priest in his cope, surrounded by elaborate tracery. Outside the chapel lies a plain stone coffin and a broken cross. Another cross stood on the highest point of the Isle; on one side was depicted the Crucifixion, with the women standing by; on the other, elaborate Runic knotting. But now the cross has fallen, and only broken fragments remain.

At some of these old churchyards there now remains literally no trace of the ancient cell, only the silent God's Acre, where sleep so many generations of the simple folk, whose one ambition was to die where they were born, and where they lived their uneventful lives, hoping at last, to be laid to rest beside their forefathers, in this quiet spot, which, from their earliest infancy, has been to them a place of awe and reverence.

Such lonely burial-grounds always recall to my memory Wordsworth's lines :

“ Of Church or Sabbath ties  
No vestige now remains. Yet thither creep  
Bereft ones, and in lowly anguish weep  
Their prayers out to the wind and naked skies.  
Proud tomb is none ; but rudely sculptured knights,  
By humble choice of plain old times are seen  
Level with earth, among the hillocks green.”

The majority, however, still retain some ruins of the old churches.

Others, again, do not betray their character by their name, as Patchen, an enclosure among the sand-hills, where the old tombs are half overgrown with bent, and half veiled with salt drifting sand.

Many a sad story these churchyards of our seaboard could tell; of terrible nights in which all the bread-winners of a hamlet have been lost, and none but lads and women left to fight life's battle. Such women, though! so brave and hardy; and withal so leal to the dead. In one of these quiet little churchyards in Yorkshire is a simple headstone, and the fishers will tell you that the man who lies there, was drowned one awful night, and the sea did not give up her dead till the end of eleven weeks!—from December till March; and during all those bitter wintry days his wife followed every receding tide, scanning each ledge and crevice of the black rocks,—each pool beneath the slippery, tangled, sea-weed. Vainly did the neighbours urge her to forego the hopeless search. Early and late the sad solitary woman was at her post, reckless of the beating storm and bitter frosty wind, still keeping her weary vigil; and at last, when almost despairing of success, her prayer was granted, and the waves brought him to her feet. So she buried him in “mother clay,” and watched by the green mound for upwards of thirty years, ere she was laid by his side.

It really is curious to remark how largely the numerous early saints of this district have left their impress on the land. In looking over a list of the parishes in Argyleshire I find the following goodly proportion, which still retain the name of some once venerated father, and, of course, each parish may, and generally does, contain several churches dedicated to others of perhaps equal note.

In other counties the parishes with this prefix are comparatively few, as here shown.

#### *Parishes in Argyle-shire.*

Kil-finichen and Kil-vickeon (Iona), Kil-Brandon and Kil-chattan, Kil-calmonell and Kil-berry, Kil-choman, Kil-charenan, Kil-dalton, Kil-mun, Kil-malic, Kil-finan, Kil-arrow, Kil-meny, Kil-lean, Kil-chenzie, Kil-malie, Kil-martin, Kil-morich, Kil-modan, Kil-more, Kil-ninian, Kil-inver, Kil-melford, Kil-bride (St. Bridget).

*Parishes in Renfrew.*

Kil-lellan, Kil-barchan, Kil-malcolm.

*Parishes in Ayr.*

Kil-marnock, Kil-birnie, Kil-winning, Kil-bride, Kirk-Michael, Kirk-Oswald.

*Parishes in Lanark.*

East Kil-bride, Kirk-Patrick-Juxta.

*Parish in Linlithgow.*

Kirk-liston.

*Parish in Edinburgh.*

Kirk-Newton.

*Parishes in Haddington.*

Preston-kirk, White-kirk.

*Parish in Berwick.*

Lady-kirk.

*Parish in Peebles.*

Kirk-urd.

*Parishes in Selkirk.*

Kirk-hope, Sel-kirk.

*Parishes in Roxburgh.*

Kirk-town, Ash-kirk, Kel-so.

*Parishes in Dumfries.*

Kirk-connel, Kirk-mahoe, Kirk-Michael, Kirk-Patrick, Fleming Wester-kirk.

*Parishes in Kirkcudbright.*

Kells, Kel-ton, Kirk-bean, Kirk-cudbright, Kirk-gunzeon, Kirk-mabzeck, Kirk-Patrick-Durham, Kirk-Patrick-Irongray.

*Parishes in Wigtown.*

Kirk-colm, Kirk-cowan, Kirk-inner, Kirk-maiden.

*Parishes in Ross and Cromarty.*

Kil-learnan, Kil-muir-Easter, Kil-tearn.

*Parishes in Inverness.*

Kil-malie, Kil-monivaig, Kil-morack, Kil-tarlity, Kill-muir Kirk-hill.

*Parishes in Aberdeen.*

Kirk-michael, Kil-drummy.

*Parishes in Perth.*

Kil-lin, Kil-madock, Kil-spindie, Kil-Michael.

*Parishes in Fife.*

Kil-many, Kil-renny, Kirk-caldy, Kil-conquhar.

*Parishes in Stirling.*

Kil-learn, Kilsyth, Fal-kirk.

*Parishes in Dumbarton.*

Kirk-intillock, Kil-maronock, Kil-patrick.

I do not know whether the prefix *kin* is a corruption of *kil*, as Kin-loss (Abbey in Morayshire), Kin-ross, Kin-loch-spelvie, Kin-loch-rannoch, Kin-loch-luichart, Kin-cardine, Kin-fauns, Kin-claven, Kin-naird, Kin-nell, Kin-tore, Kin-nethmont, Kin-gussie, Kin-tail, Kin-garth, &c., &c.

I also find Kil-churn, Kil-menny, Kil-bervie, Kil-bucho, Kil-creggan, Kil-finan, Killundine on the Morven coast, and Kilintuintaik (which last was the cell of St. Winifred); Killouran on Isle Colonsay, was the cell of St. Oran. Kil-michael Lussa is near Kiels and Kilmory, in Knapdale. Cantyre has a special cluster of saintly cells—Kil-Kerran, Kil-Michael, Kil-Chouslan (pronounced Kooslan), Kil-Coivin, Kil-Kevan, Kil Choman, Kil Colmkeil, Kil-Raven, Kill-Davie, Kil-Eolan, Kill-Blaan, Kil-Ewen, Kil-lean, Kil-kenzie.

It is probable that some of the saintly names here quoted may be those of St. Columba's predecessors, for there seems every reason to believe that the honour of having first introduced Christianity to this district has been erroneously attributed to him, St. Kieran, whose church and cave we saw near Campbeltown, having, it is said, come over from Ireland with a colony of Christian Dalriads, who settled in Argyleshire, some fifty years before Columba, the fiery Abbot of Durrow, had quarrelled with, and been banished from Ireland by, the Ardriagh, or President.

It seems that when attending a great meeting of the lords

temporal and spiritual of the Green Isle, Columba was rash enough to take with him a young son of Aodh, King of Connaught, who was at enmity with the Ardriagh. Even the sanctity of the Abbot proved no protection for the young man, who was treacherously slain. Then followed war, in which Columba sided with the aggrieved father, and eventually received that command to quit Ireland, which brought his fiery energies to the aid of the little Christian band of Dalriads in Cantyre; whence he moved onward to that Isle where, in after years, kings and rulers craved permission to lay their dust near that of one so holy.

St. Kieran is not the only pioneer of the faith whom we are apt to rob of honour due, while heaping veneration on St. Columba. How constantly we hear the latter spoken of, as though he first had brought to our Western Isles that light of Christianity, which thence radiated to the farthest corners of the mainland! So far from this being the case, we know that for a century before the birth of Columba, a series of duly ordained bishops had ruled over Scottish dioceses in various parts of the land; these being, for the most part, native Christians, who, of their own accord, had gone to Rome to study. Their existence as Christians gives some colour to the belief that, so early as the third century, Christ's Name was known in this land.

The first bishop of whom we hear was that St. Ninian who, in the end of the fourth century, returned from Rome to his native county of Galloway, where, we are told, "he ordained presbyters, consecrated bishops, and organized parishes." At Whitehorn may still be seen his *Candida Casa*, the first Christian church built of stone in Britain. Here he was buried, about the year A. D. 430.

In the following year St. Palladius was sent to this country as "Primus Episcopus to the Scots believing in Christ," and about the same period St. Patrick appears on the scene. He was born about the year A. D. 373, in Dumbarton, the place of his birth being named in his honour, Kilpatrick. Having been captured by pirates and carried over to Ireland, he was filled with an exceeding longing to Christianize the Hibernians. History records how he

escaped from slavery, and contrived to reach the shores of Gaul, where he studied the Scriptures for thirty-five years before he was ordained priest. Nor was it till he was about sixty years of age that he was sent back as Bishop, to commence his mission in the Emerald Isle. The patient student proved a long-lived teacher, and is said to have died at his post in his 120th year.

Early in the sixth century, we hear how St. Kentigern (better known to us as St. Mungo, the patron saint of the beautiful old cathedral at Glasgow), fixed his see at the place where that city now stands. To him the credit seems due of first Christianizing part of Wales. He owed his early training to St. Serf, the Apostle of the Orkneys; so those remote Isles must have had their first rays of light, long before the disciples of Iona went thither "as doves from the nest of Columba." The fame of that most energetic worker certainly has no need to borrow lustre by defrauding his predecessors of their rightful share; doubtless, when he landed on this wild shore of Cantyre, his heart was gladdened by the knowledge that the light he strove to diffuse was already glimmering in divers corners of the land.

In defiance of the commonly received account of his having first landed on Isle Oronsay, near Colonsay, and having thence departed because he could still see Ireland, which he had vowed never to behold again,—the tradition in Cantyre is, that he first landed at the southernmost point of the Moyle; and that, although in full view of the Irish coast, he here built his little church, where he preached for some time before he went to Iona, leaving his saintly mark on many a nook. At the southern extremity of the Moyle or "Mull" the men of Cantyre still point out the "Bay of the Boat," as the spot where his frail currach, of wicker-work covered with hides, first touched the shore, whence he was to make his way to the court of Connal MacCongail, King of the Northern Scots, to whom he was nearly related, being himself of the blood-royal. Connal and his people, being already Christians, gave him warm welcome, and sent him under safe escort to Brude, the King of the Picts. He too declared himself a Christian; and his chiefs and people were not slow to follow his example. Soon even Broichan, the

Arch-Druid, was converted, having been cured by St. Columba of a dangerous and sudden illness.

To those who accept this form of the tradition, perhaps the most interesting ecclesiastical site of Cantyre is the aforesaid little chapel, known as Kil-Colm-Keil, the Cell of St. Columba, at Keil, situated at the extreme end of the Mull of Cantyre,—just such an one as that where King Arthur was laid, when sorely wounded in that battle among the mountains beside the winter sea—

“ A ruined shrine, beside the place of tombs,  
Where lay the mighty bones of ancient men,  
Old knights. And over them the sea wind sang  
Shrill, chill—with flakes of foam.”

It is a tiny roofless ruin—its grey walls veiled by luxuriant ferns which cling to every crevice, and form a soft, green coping. It lies so close to the sea, that the salt foam dashes over the old tombs, and the tough green bent creeps up amongst the stones, while bright sea-pinks gleam through the mossy grass. A steep crag of reddish rock rises directly above it; and, just beyond, the bluff headland of the Moyle itself rises abruptly from the sea, which here scarcely ever knows calm, but seems to revel in its joyous liberty.

There is not a sailor or a fisher on all this coast, or the opposite shores of Ireland (Antrim being but twelve miles distant), who does not dread the mighty green waves that are for ever raging in their ceaseless battle with the stern old Moyle. In quick succession the booming breakers burst on the unfeeling rocks, which have withstood them for such countless ages, and now fling them back once more. With swift rush, the baffled waters fall back on the advancing wave, and thus reinforced, renew the ceaseless, hopeless attack,—then, “white with rage,” dash themselves to atoms, and fall in dazzling spray and foam over the cliff.

If you count the waves, you will see that about every sixth is larger than the others, a chieftain in fact; and if, as it curls proudly over, you can catch a gleam of light through the transparent water, you will see its wonderful clear green, at the very moment that the land breeze carries back its crest in tossing spray, like the mane of some white sea-horse. Most beautiful of all, is the moment when







two waves, whose courses differ slightly, come to a violent collision, and dash their white spray heavenward,—an encounter which you will here see to perfection, as two strong currents meet at this point. Perhaps if the sea is not very angry indeed, there will come a lull—an amnesty,—and the graves that were drenched with the salt sea spray, will dry in the sunlight; and the shepherds can put off their boat, and row to the grassy islands to see how it fares with their sheep.

It was on one of these unwonted days of rest, that I found my way to Kilcolmkeil. Let each who loves the peace of nature, picture the scene for himself. The beetling crag,—God’s-acre bathed in light,—earth and sky, gleaming with that clear shining that cometh after rain. And the hush and silence of the calm wide ocean, noiselessly stealing on and on, till the great brown rocks, with their wealth of golden seaweeds, lie hidden, like purple shadows, beneath the cool and quiet blue, and only a tiny edge of white rippling foam, marks the lip of the lazy wave as it glides to and fro, or brims over the ribbed sand, glancing and gleaming in the bright sunlight. Only here and there, the still surface of the waters is broken by a broad leaf of brown sea-ware, waving idly from the forest below, with quivering motion, like some curious wriggling sea-snake; or a floating tangle, like long human hair, washed to and fro, suggests some fancy of the sea giving up her dead, to this green resting-place. Now and then, there is the quick flash of some white-winged gull, as it darts upon its prey, and then again floating upward, hangs idly poised in the sunny air.

Altogether it is a scene of most blessed peace, such as sinks into the heart with strange sweet power, soothing and lulling the turmoil of its cares. For there is no more dear companionship than that of the sea, which in its ever-changing moods, seems almost like some human thing, that one day claims our sympathies with its own wild joys or sorrows, ready in its turn to weep or laugh with ours; to-day so calm and peaceful, laughing in the sunlight; to-morrow roused to mad excitement, lashing itself into wild rage; then, when its wrath is spent, subsiding as though repentant, lying still and silent beneath the cold mists, dreary and desolate and sad,—like a sorrowful spirit, when all life’s energies are subdued.

They only, who have been cradled and nurtured within sound of that ceaseless song of the wild waters, can fully realize their subtle charm, or tell the unutterable yearning for their music,—the craving for their breadth, for their reflections of the great clouds,—for their incessant movement, which oftentimes comes over the spirit, when the body is tied to some monotonous inland region; the unspeakable longing for sight and sound of the great green waves, the tossing spray and screaming sea-birds, and the wild breeze that rushes past, laden with the salt sea-brine. None else can understand the intensity of that passionate love which the sea and its shores can inspire—the thousand memories linked with those wide white sands—those slippery rocks—that brown, wet tangle, each leaf of which seems to have some hidden power whereby to twine itself round the innermost depths of the soul. None else can sympathize with the bitter disappointment of awakening from some blissful vision of shell-gathering, or idling by those great waters, to find that in truth it was but a dream.

To such I say, if you would see Old Ocean in its glory, come to Cantyre; but those who desire true mountain scenery had better stay away, for when once you leave the seaboard and turn inland, you will find that you have left all beauty behind you; the great swelling green hills do indeed rise to a height of 2000 feet; but the very name Cnoc Maigh, or the Hill of the Plain, suggests mere shapeless high ground. Much of this is arable, but at the time of our visit, a sore pest was troubling the land, owing to the lack of frost in the previous winter. This was a gluttonous grub, which had appeared in countless myriads, and had eaten bare all the fair green crops, leaving only fields of parched red earth. Some of the farmers were brave enough to hazard a second sowing, but with small hope of better success.

But the glory of Cantyre lies in her dairy-farms; the rich fine soil yielding abundant pasture, and supporting from twenty to thirty cows on each farm. It is a land flowing with milk and money, with comfortable, well-to-do inhabitants, who thankfully told us that the cattle plague had as yet never found its way to their shores. But though the farmer will offer you wine and

spirits in abundance, you must not test his hospitality so cruelly as to expect such a bowl of creamy milk as any old "Caillach" in a black bothy would be proud to offer you, should she own but one gentle "Crummie." At these great dairies, the farmer prides himself on his unbroken pans of rich milk, therein estimating prospective pounds of butter and cheese for a sure market.

Looking on these prosperous dairy-farms, the idea very forcibly suggested itself, that such farms, worked on a co-operative system, may yet bring gold and comfort to many a district, where, although the soil is unfit for cultivation, it assuredly affords rich natural pastures, which could hardly be more usefully employed, both for the farmer and the public.

To the antiquarian, Cantyre offers some special attractions. I am told that no part of Scotland is richer in relics of pre-Christian times; cairns and barrows, monumental pillars erected above stone coffins, and rude urns containing the ashes of bodies that had been burnt, having been found in many of its green downs.

There are countless old legends attached to these green hills, and to the cliffs and caves along the shore; tales of the warrior and mighty hunter, Fingal, and his faithful hound Bran; wonderful holes in the rock, that have served for his cooking pots, wherein to boil rude kettles formed of the skins of the deer, and filled with flesh, such as he loved to eat half raw, and caves that have been honoured by his presence; but these tales have been so carefully collected by Campbell of Islay, that all lovers of such lore need only refer to his 'Tales of the West Highlands' for an inexhaustible store of wild Gaelic legends.

Though by no means one of the most ancient ruins, the fine old Castle of Saddell, with its ruined monastery and picturesque kirkyard, are among the most remarkable ecclesiastical remains on Cantyre. Here quaintly-sculptured tombs of ecclesiastics and warriors lie beneath the shadow of some fine old trees close to the shore. Two of these represent knights clad in armour, and round them there are inscriptions in Saxon character, setting forth that these were Macdonalds of Saddell. Several fine old Crosses have fallen, or been overthrown, and their broken fragments lie half-

hidden by the tangled brambles. Little of the monastery now remains, as it unhappily proved a useful quarry for ruthless hands, and the modern dwelling-house has been in a great measure built at the expense of the church, all the hewn stones having been removed, and the offices paved with gravestones—a species of sacrilege which, until the present generation, was terribly common throughout Britain; and indeed it needs all the efforts of antiquarians to check it even now.

I well remember with what difficulty my father stopped similar devastation at Kinloss Abbey in Morayshire, where its stones were rapidly being carried off by neighbouring farmers, to build barns and dykes, bridges and gate-posts. One fine old stone coffin had been converted into a pig's trough! There have even been cases where a neighbouring farmer has spared himself the trouble of stealing the stones, and therewith building byres, by the simple expedient of making use of the grey ruins of the old church itself, as a convenient substitute for cattle-sheds, sheep-pens, or even pig-styes! These neglected churchyards were also treated as monumental storehouses, whence beautifully-sculptured slabs might be selected to mark fresh graves, the modern name being roughly chiselled over the weather-worn escutcheon of some brave knight of old; or perhaps the robber went so far as to smoothe the slab, as in the case of that beautiful stone at Hilton of Cadboll, where the elaborate tracery has been completely obliterated from one side, and replaced by an inscription to the memory of "Alexander Duff, Esq. and His Thrie Wives"!

The Monastery of Saddell is one of considerable interest. It was founded in the twelfth century by one of the Lords of the Isles—whether by the great Somerled or by his son Ronald seems uncertain, but it very soon acquired a reputation for sanctity, and great men of old craved to be buried there. Of Somerled, and his wars with Godred, King of Man, both old Sagas and Gaelic legends tell many tales. There were terrible sea-fights, in one of which the Manx fleet of galleys was so sorely beaten, that Godred was compelled to yield all the Sudereys, or Southern Isles, including "Yla and Kintyre," retaining only the island of Man itself. The

wife of Somerled was a daughter of Olaf the Swarthy, King of Man and the Isles.

Various accounts are given of the manner of his death, but whether in a sea-fight with pirates, or by assassination in his own tent, seems uncertain. One version is that he sailed with 160 galleys to besiege Renfrew, and fell in action with the Scottish army. In any case his body seems to have been brought to Saddell for burial, and laid where so many turbulent warriors now sleep in stillness, and the only unrest is that of the restless ocean.

In the castle is shown an old dungeon where Macdonald starved a luckless Irishman who had the misfortune to own too beautiful a wife. At first he only confined him in a granary ; and the prisoner found means to get at the grain, and so was kept alive. Then he changed his prison ; but through the barred window a kindly hen came daily, and gave him her egg. So the flickering flame of life still burned. Once more he was removed, and cast into this deep noisome cell, where nor bird nor beast could bring him supplies—and here at length he died, having gnawed his own flesh in the agony of his hunger. Then Macdonald gave him burial ; and the beautiful wife, looking down from the high tower, espied the funeral, and asked whose it was ; when she knew that it was her own liege lord, she cried in bitter anguish that she would be with him anon, and with one wild spring, she dashed herself from the battlements, and was buried by his side.

The ruins of another old prison still remain in the wood close by, and many tales of the treachery and vengeance of the lords of Saddell are told in connection with these grey walls.

This part of Cantyre also has one or two traditions of Robert the Bruce ; and the little Isle of Rachrin, off the Irish coast (distinctly visible from the Mull), was to him a haven of refuge in times of danger.

In the old Fort of Dunaverty he also found warm welcome. A few scattered stones, on a rocky promontory, are all that now mark this old Castle of Dunaverty, “the Fort of Blood,” once a mighty stronghold of the Danes, whose fleet were wont to anchor near the opposite Isle of Sanda, still known to the Highlanders as the.

gathering-place of the Danes, by whom it was called Avoyn, 'the Island of Harbours.' Upon it are the ruins of St. Annian's Chapel, once a place of refuge, where all outlaws might find sanctuary.

On the ruins of the Danish Fort a new castle was built by the Macdonalds, who held their own in Cantyre till the days of Montrose, whose cause they espoused even unto death. But when the star of the Covenanters was in the ascendant, and the Royalists were driven even to this Land's End, Sir Allister Macdonald sailed for Ireland, there to raise new forces. He left his castle in the hands of his brother, with a garrison of three hundred men.

Very soon General Leslie, with three thousand of Argyle's men, advanced to besiege the old fort. Bravely it was defended, but after awhile, Leslie discovered that the only well for the supply of the garrison lay outside the walls, and that the water was brought in artificially. Of course this was at once cut off, and not one drop was to be had, to quench their raging thirst. It was midsummer, and even the kindly rains from heaven forgot to fall. Vainly were all eyes strained to watch for Sir Allister's return, across the sea, whose cool green waves dashed their salt sea foam so mockingly in the faces of these dying men, at their last extremity. Sir Allister had been slain in battle; so they might watch till they were weary, but all in vain.

At length they were forced to capitulate, and for five days were kept prisoners on their rock together with a hundred more who had been captured in a cave, or rather, smoked out of it, as the manner was. Leslie seems to have inclined to mercy towards the captives, but he was hounded on by a Puritan preacher, Nave by name, and knave by nature, who insisted on the slaughter "of these Amalekites." At length his counsel prevailed, and all the helpless captives were either put to the sword, or dashed from the precipice into the sea, where they lighted on hard, cruel, jagged rocks. And so they perished (all save one man, and one infant), and from time to time, bleached bones and skulls are still washed up from the clefts of the rocks; and the fishers tell how, when the wind drifts the sand from the bank close by, heaps of human bones are sometimes seen, which the next kindly wind covers up again with a fresh layer of soft yellow sand.



The escape of the little infant was the only gleam of light in that day's devilish work. Its nurse caught it up naked in her arms and fled along the shore. She was stopped by a Campbell, and vowed the child was hers: "It has the eye of the Macdonald" was the answer. Nevertheless, the heart of Craignish was soft, and, dividing his plaid, he gave her half for the naked baby, and suffered her to escape. During those five days of waiting on the rock, another Macdonald drew near, with a small body of men, to relieve the garrison. As soon as the piper perceived them, he struck up a note of warning to bid them turn back. Thus they were saved from the cruel fate that awaited their brethren; but the piper paid dearly for his tune, the enraged Campbells cutting off his fingers to prevent his playing any more such strains.

Thus it was, that Cantyre passed from the hands of the Macdonalds to those of the *gleed* (squinting) Marquis of Argyle and his clansmen. It seemed as though Heaven's righteous retribution sought them out, when, ere many years had past, a terrible plague came and utterly depopulated the whole of Cantyre. It was the same year that the Great Plague was raging in London. The pestilence swept over the land in visible form, as a great white cloud laden with death—just such a cloud as, in later days, has rested on Malaga, and other cities, in times of cholera (on Dumfries, for instance, where in 1843 the cholera raged for months, nor ever stayed its ravages till one-third of the inhabitants were laid in great pits in the overcrowded churchyards. And during all the time that the Angel of Death thus brooded over the city, a pestilential cloud hung like a death-pall, floating in mid-air, above the circle of hills which enclose the city as in a cup. It was a dull heavy film, through which neither the foul air could escape nor could fresh air circulate, but all was dead stagnation; even the sunbeams passing through were discoloured, and fell with lurid glare upon the scene of horror below). The fever-cloud rested long on Cantyre, and left its traces for many generations. So sorely did Argyle's estates suffer, that moneys were voted by Parliament for his relief, while the poorer folk received such help as the churches could collect.

A sunnier legend of Dunaverty in its palmy days, tells how its

chief rescued the fair daughter of the King of Carrickfergus from the pillion of O'Connor, the King of Innisheon, who had run away with her against her will. He restored her to her father, and continued his honoured guest till, in his turn, he claimed the maiden's hand, and was cast into a dungeon to rue his presumption. Thence rescued by the damsel, he escaped to Dunaverty; but once more returning in quest of his love, found that she too was now in durance vile, for having aided his flight. So, like the hardy Norseman of old, he showed that neither bolt nor bar could part him from his own true love, and carried her safely across the sea to his own old castle. The wrathful king followed in his galley, with many mighty men of war, vowing swift vengeance. Happily counsels of peace prevailed, and the lady obtained pardon for her lord; so they all went back together to the Emerald Isle, and lived merrily to the end of the chapter, and their children became kings, from whom the Earls of Antrim claim descent.

About two miles from Campbelton lies the old kirkyard of Kilcousland, one of the many which, to me, give an especial charm to these green shores; lying, as they do, almost within reach of the wild spray, which, dashing heavenward, falls in lightest showers over the rank grass and golden iris, and mossy stones, beneath which sleep so many forgotten generations. Kilcousland has no gravestones of especial interest, but (half hidden by large-leaved coltsfoot and dockans, and stately tall white hemlocks) are many which are quaint and old, and though the majority only show crowns and shields and grotesque death's-heads-and-crossbones, and fat-faced cherubs with lumps of moss for their eyes, or else such growth of golden lichen as Old Mortality would have loved to scrape away, there are some devices which tell the daily work of the sleeper forcibly enough. Thus, a ploughman has quite a graceful grouping of reins and harness; a carpenter keeps his hammer and saw and sundry other tools; while the tailor carries his shears and his goose to the end of time.

On the broken shaft of an old cross, a carved galley tells of some forgotten Island chief, while a neighbouring stone bears a knight's two-handed sword, surrounded with runic knotting. The next

tomb bears only a heavy dagger on a shield, no name to mark who sleeps beneath.

I sat for many hours in this calm "God's acre," in the shade of the ruined church, watching the ever-changing colours of the quiet sea, lipping up to the foot of the green hill on which I rested; constant changes from blue to green, and purple and silvery greys, all blended by the reflection of every tint of sky and cloud, according as the angle of the broken wavelet either mirrors these, or lets us see beneath its surface, into its own depths; giving us hints of the wonderful world below the waters. There were broken reflections, too, from the hills of Arran, and from Ailsa Craig, which is a very fine rock-islet, at the entrance to Campbelton harbour. In form it resembles the familiar Bass Rock, rising precipitously from the sea to a height of 1100 feet. It is a mass of grey columnar basalt, which to the north-west presents a very grand face of great basaltic columns. On the opposite side are the ruins of an ancient square tower, on a high rock-terrace overlooking the sea. It is a very green isle, and affords pasture to many goats. A multitude of rabbits and innumerable sea-birds also hold the Craig in possession.

Now and then I watched a white sail round the lighthouse, and enter the quiet haven. I thought of the words of one whose dying prayer was—

"Lay me beneath the grass,  
Where it slopes to the south and the sea;  
Where the living I love may pass,  
And, passing, may think of me"—

and I thought that just such a churchyard as this was the resting-place for which she craved. It was a scene of great peace, and I lingered till the blue sky of noon had changed to that pale primrose against which each form of earth cuts with such intensity of colour; and the evening breeze, rustling among the tall flags, sounded like a mysterious whisper from the sleepers around me. The saint to whom this spot was dedicated, was a certain kindly old St. Couslan, whose sympathies were all on the side of young couples whose true love was thwarted by stern parents and guardians. To make matters easy for them, he set up near his cell

a large stone with a hole in the centre, and announced that run-away couples who succeeded in reaching this stone, and here joining hands, should be considered indissolubly united. Here we have a trace of the earlier paganism—a survival of that old Norse custom of betrothal, which bade lovers join hands through a circular hole in a sacrificial stone. This was called the promise of Odin, and was practised in the Northern Isles long after they had embraced Christianity.

The custom was long observed in Orkney, where, a little to the east of one of the two clusters of large standing stones (the stones of Stennis) there was one stone with a hole right through it. To this stone of betrothal came all the Orkney lovers, to plight their troth by clasping hands through the perforated stone. This ceremony was considered so binding, that there was no downright necessity for a subsequent marriage with Christian rites. Indeed there were certain advantages in dispensing with such a ceremony, as those who were joined together with the sanction of the Church could never more be parted, whereas those who had dispensed with it, and had only bound themselves by the promise of Odin, might, should they grow weary one of another, legally annul their marriage, by merely entering the Church of Stennis, and there parting.

“They both came to the kirk of Steinhouse,” says Dr. Henry of Orkney, “and after entering the kirk the one went out at the south, and the other at the north door, by which act they were holden to be legally divorced, and free to make another choice.”

The celebrated perforated stone of Stennis is known to have been an object of veneration to the men of Orkney, long before the Northmen came, and called it after Odin, and the people continued to hold it in reverence till the beginning of this century, when it was destroyed.

A simple and more poetic form of betrothal was for the lad and lass to stand on either side of a narrow brook, and to clasp hands across the stream, calling on the moon to witness their pledge.

Sometimes the young couple each took a handful of meal, and kneeling down, with a bowl between them, emptied their hands therein, and mixed the meal; at the same time taking an oath on

the Bible never to sever, till death should them part. A case was tried in Dalkeith in 1872, where this simple marriage ceremony was proved by Scotch law to be legally binding.

But the commonest and certainly the most curious custom of betrothal, was that of thumb-licking, when lovers licked their thumbs and pressed them together, vowing constancy. This was held binding as an oath, and to break a vow so made, was equivalent to perjury. This custom is still quite common in Ross-shire, on concluding all manner of bargains, such as sales of cattle or grain. Hence the saying, "I'll gie ye my thumb on it," or, "I'll lay my thoomb on that," expressing that the statement last made is satisfactory. There are men still in the prime of life, who remember when the custom of thumb-licking was the recognized conclusion of business transactions, even so far south as the Clyde, and not unknown in Glasgow itself.

Whatever may have been the origin of this quaint ceremony, it is curious to remember that the ancient Indian custom on sealing a bargain or conferring a gift was to pour water into the hand of the recipient, as is shown on many sculptures. Probably the thumb-licking was a convenient substitute for the original symbol.

Another saintly Father, who was reputed to take considerable interest in the matrimonial affairs of his people, was St. Coivin, who gets the credit of having established a most extraordinary law of divorce, which assuredly savours of earlier pagan days. He is said to have invited all unhappy couples to meet at his cell on a given night, when, having blindfolded each person, he started them on a pell-mell race thrice sunwise round the church. Suddenly the saint would cry "Cabhag!" i. e. seize quickly! and each swain must catch what lass he could, and be true to her for one whole year, at the end of which, if still dissatisfied, he might return to the saintly cell, and try a new assortment in the next matrimonial game at blind-man's-buff!

The spot where these strange games at blindfold love were played, is the old kirkyard of Kilkevan, on the high ground overlooking Macnahanish Bay, one of the most attractive, though loneliest, reaches of our sea-coast. Here the finest golden sands stretch for

miles along the shore, where the great green waves break ceaselessly. To me St. Coivin's cell was a specially attractive sketching-ground, with its distant view of the five blue peaks of Jura, its pleasant surroundings of grassy downs, fragrant with lilac orchids and the quiet ivy-covered ruins. Many of its sculptured gravestones are of unusual beauty. Some of these bear the figures of knights, with sword as long as that of Robert the Bruce, and devices of the chase or

#### KIRKYARD OF KILKEVAN.

armorial bearings carved all round them. Others have no figure, only one long sword ; some have only daggers. There is no mark to tell who sleeps beneath, or whence came the stones, though the people have a tradition that they were brought from Iona,—which, indeed, is likely enough ; not as the spoils of ruthless pillage, but as the handiwork of some of the holy brethren, well skilled in cunning stone-work, who doubtless supplied these monuments to such of their neighbours as were willing to pay for them. Be that

as it may, the carvers and the knights have been alike forgotten for many long ages, and here they still lie, all facing the east—waiting. The restless agitation of the mighty waters has not troubled their sleep; though, to the idle dreamer who lies among the golden iris watching the broad lights and shadows passing quickly over old Ocean's face, it seems such a constant emblem of the tossing and unrest of life, that he cannot well put away the thousand thoughts thus awakened, and as the murmurous echoes rise and fall with the breeze, they seem to whisper the words of an old song:—

“Like the wild ceaseless motion,  
Of the deep heaving wave,  
Is our heart's restless beating,  
From our birth to our grave.  
Toss'd by strong stormy passions  
On the swift wind we flee,  
Till life's bark reach the haven  
Where is no more sea.”

No spot on earth could well be more peaceful than the shores of beautiful Macnahanish Bay, and the green woods and braes of Losset, where we have spent so many pleasant days. The fields close to the house are white with narcissus, the uncultured growth of many generations; while genuine wild flowers—blue and green and gold—riot in the shelter of the glen, and all day long the mavis and merle pour forth their jubilant songs in the quiet wood.

It is curious to note how the absence of frost favours the growth of plants too delicate for our eastern coast. Camellias bloom in the open air, and great hedges of crimson fuschia live securely all the winter, on the lee side of sturdy fir trees, whose upper branches, however, are all scorched by the blighting sea-winds.

I wonder what peculiarity of atmosphere causes the wonderful splendour of the sunsets on this coast. You know how much we have always heard of the amazing glory of sunrise and sunset in the East, more especially during the rains. I may safely say that during a residence of several years in various parts of the tropics, I have scarcely once neglected to do homage to these outgoings of morning and evening, but, with perhaps two exceptions, I have seen

nothing that could bear away the palm of beauty from our own skies; and I am more and more tempted to believe that these "odious comparisons" are due only to the different hours of rising and dining, which compel travellers to use their eyes in a way they quite forget to do when at home.

Have you not sometimes wondered at the dull hearts, and blind eyes, that could scarcely glance westward for one moment, though the golden gates seemed to have opened behind the heavy purple clouds, just flushed with rosy crimson; and all so quickly changing; softening and mellowing in the hazy sunset light, till earth, and sea, and sky alike lay steeped in loveliness? Blind eyes they must be, that have not yet been opened to read the Divine Book of Nature, written day by day by the finger of God Himself; the God of Infinite variety, Whose worship men are so apt to reduce to a mere system of forms, of infinite sameness. Surely the mind that most dearly loves to drink in the beauty of the visible world, must be the most in sympathy with that of the Great Artist Who delights in creating such refinements of beauty, "rejoicing in His work."

One advantage over the sunsets of the East we certainly possess, in the long, beautiful, hours of twilight, when the curlew and the plover alone are on the wing; and that still later hour "'twixt the gloaming and the mirk" when all voices of nature are hushed, except the grand music of the sea, murmuring its endless harmonies to the wild bent hills.

I doubt if there is any spot in all the British Isles, where you may study Old Ocean in all its varied tempers more perfectly than you can here, in beautiful Macnahanish Bay, which lies outspread before our windows, so that morning, noon, and night we watch its changing moods. From earliest times this spot has been noted for the tremendous size and roaring of the waves, which on the slightest provocation seem to lash themselves to raging fury, and many a brave ship has perished here, deceived by the lowness of the land, and so lured on to destruction.

The whole force of the broad Atlantic seems to sweep into the Bay, as the great wild waves rush onward, chafing in their tumultuous wiath, albeit with such "method in their madness;" rising



and swelling so deliberately, as each mighty green billow curls and breaks, in a crest of gleaming foam ; and the seething water dashes noisily over the shingle, bubbling and surging among the masses of rock which lie heaped in such grand confusion along the coast—or else tossing its spray in wild sport, right over the cliffs and caves, where the delicate ferns are nestling, to the green bank above, where the young lambs are learning to crop the sweet short grass from those dangerous ledges, and spring back, startled, by such chilling practical jokes.

The waves are not idle in their sport. They are washing up great masses of brown sea-ware, not carefully gathered with a loving hand, but torn up by the roots, from the great gardens in the ocean depths. And the poor kelp-burners are watching anxiously to see what harvest they may hope to reap. Some have only their creels, rough wicker baskets, which they carry on their own shoulders, but here and there is a little cart, drawn by a strong pony ; a willing little beast, which strains every nerve to drag its burden of wet, heavy weed, over the rough shingle, to some spot above high-water mark, where it may be spread over the grass or sand, and left for several days to dry ; this is the most anxious time in the harvest, as anxious as haymaking, in this uncertain climate ; for one heavy shower of rain will wash away all the precious salts and iodine, and leave the beach strewn only with useless lumber.

As soon as it is safely dried, the weed is heaped into little stacks, till the last moment, when the furnace is ready to burn it. It is not “all fish that comes to the net” of the kelp-burner. Those broad fronds of brown wrack which strew the shore are useless to him. He most values the masses of brown tangle covered with little bladders, and when the tide goes out, he will cut all that he can find growing on the rocks, and add it to his store ; this being by far richer in salts than that which is cast up by the sea.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The sea-weeds most valued for this purpose, are *Chorda filum*, *Laminaria digitata*, *Laminaria bulbosa*, *Fucus nodosus*, *Fucus serratus*, *F. vesiculosus*, *Himanthalia lorea*. These yield salts in various proportions. One ton of

Let us sit down awhile, and watch him burn those brown heaps which he collected last week. We cannot stand on the open shore, or the bent hills, for the wind is blowing inland with such violence, that we should be sent right across the Isthmus—but there is a green bank at the foot of the cliff, facing the sea, where hardly a breath of air stirs the blue-bells and foxgloves; for the wind strikes the shore in front of it, and then seems to be thrown upward at a sharp angle to the top of the crag, and though we seem to be right in the wind's eye, we shall really be in perfect shelter. This is a wrinkle, which holds good for all rocky coasts.<sup>1</sup>

Now the kelp-burners have made their kiln—it is a long deep grave lined with large stones. First they sprinkle a light covering of dry weed over these stones, and coax it till it burns, then slowly they add a handful at a time, till the grave is filled, and heaped up, with a semi-fluid mass, which they stir incessantly with a long iron bar; and a very picturesque group they are, half veiled by volumes of white opal smoke which has a pungent marine smell.

This work will go on for hours, and when all the tangle has been burnt, the kiln will be allowed to half-cool, and its contents cut into solid blocks of a dark bluish-grey material. These very soon

kelp should yield an average of about eight pounds of iodine, and certain quantities of chloride of sodium, chloride of potassium, carbonate of soda, etc. When subject to special treatment, and distillation, it can also be made to yield two or three cwt. of sulphate of ammonia, and several gallons of naphtha, of parafin oil, and of volatile oil. It is said that the sea-weed of the Channel Isles is richer in iodine than that of any other place, and it is calculated that the Channel Islanders might easily manufacture 10,000 tons annually. In Brittany and Normandy (where it is called Varek) about 25,000 tons per annum are produced.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Darwin evidently alludes to this circumstance in his Notes on St. Helena. He says: "I was standing on the edge of a plain, terminated by a great cliff of about a thousand feet in depth, when, at the distance of a few yards to windward, I saw some tern struggling against a very strong breeze, whilst where I stood the air was quite calm. Approaching close to the brink, where the current seemed to be deflected upwards from the face of the cliff, I stretched out my arm, and immediately felt the full force of the wind: an invisible barrier, two yards in width, separated perfectly calm air from a strong blast.

become as hard and heavy as iron, and are then ready for the market. From this material much carbonate of soda and various salts are obtained. But its most valued product is iodine, precious alike to the physician and the photographer. Till very recently this was only to be obtained from the ash of dried sea-weed, consequently the discovery of its various good qualities gave a renewed impetus to the kelp trade. Now, however, iodine is more cheaply and readily obtained from crude Chili saltpetre, so the demand for kelp has again decreased. Moreover, it has been discovered that much of the iodine which was altogether wasted in the process of burning, can be saved and utilized by a process of distillation.

Kelp was formerly of very great value in the manufacture of soap, alum, and glass, but it is now found that crude carbonate of soda of better quality, and cheaper, can be obtained from sea-salt. Moreover, the great extent to which potass is now imported has proved a very heavy loss to the kelp-burners, whose hard work consequently brings a comparatively small return. And years ago, the removal of the duty on Spanish barilla was a matter of ruin to many of the Islanders, chiefly those of Skye, where the weed contained a much smaller proportion of the precious salts, than on other shores, such as those of Orkney, and where, consequently, this manufacture has been entirely given up.

Kelp-making does not appear to have been one of the industries of the Isles till about the middle of last century, when it became a distinctive feature, and so lucrative that some small farms paid their whole rent from the produce of the rocks. Thus it came to pass that the shores and rocks were sometimes let separately from the farms; and then the farmers were badly off indeed,—as indeed they are still, having to go miles to collect the necessary sea-weed wherewith to manure their fields, sometimes carrying it in creels on their backs for several miles, or fetching it in boats from long distances across the stormy seas. When the value of kelp was at its height, several farms in the Orkneys actually rose in rental from 40*l.* to 300*l.* per annum.

The Orkney kelp is used in the manufacture of plate-glass, and fetches double the price of that made in the Hebrides, which

is only fit for soap. Nevertheless in the year 1818 no less than 6000 tons were produced in the Hebrides alone, and sold at £20 per ton. In that year the kelp harvest of the entire coast of Scotland was upwards of 20,000 tons, and was valued at half a million sterling. Within the last few years, the price of kelp in the Hebrides fell to about 4*l.* per ton. In former times 6*l.* was the average, though it varied from 2*l.* to 20*l.* This high price was of short duration, and only continued during a sudden failure in the supply of Spanish barilla. When you consider with what infinite labour and risk this crop is gathered, and that every ton of kelp represents twenty-four tons of sea-weed, you must allow that there is pretty stiff work for the money, and that these kelp-burners do not eat the bread of idleness. The price obtained for kelp has continued gradually to decline, and latterly its manufacture has, in many places, been altogether abandoned, though the loss of this source of revenue is a serious matter to the people. It seems probable, however, that science may come to their rescue by utilizing the sea-weeds—once accounted so worthless, but now known to be so exceedingly precious. In the first place their value is now so fully recognized, as forming the submarine covert, wherein the baby fishes find not only food but a refuge from their foes,—that on some parts of the British coast (Devonshire) the Board of Trade has prohibited the cutting of sea-ware.

But to all our shores, old Ocean brings a liberal supply of drift-weed, precious to the farmer, to whose land they supply the phosphates and salts which nourish all plants. Cattle too, and horses, and sometimes sheep, find their winter fodder on the shore, and in times of scarcity many of our poor fellow-subjects eke out their scanty living by the use of certain sea-weeds, chiefly those known as dulse and tangle, which are offered for sale in many of our Scottish towns,<sup>1</sup> not in the prepared forms, which to the Chinese and Japanese appear so appetizing, but in their crude, uninviting state. Now, when all food-products are being scientifically dis-

<sup>1</sup> In this hard spring of 1883 sea-weed (*Fucus vesiculosus*) is being largely used by the poor Irish—chiefly in Donegal, where it is prepared with Indian corn.

cussed, the merits of this great family are being realized—a family, moreover, of which not one poisonous species is known.<sup>1</sup> So now wise men are turning their attention to methods for utilizing these edible properties as food for man and beast; and in addition to these, many other good qualities are now being discovered. It is found that sea-weed yields a jelly ten times as strong as isinglass, and, by a new process, this glutinous matter can be separated from the weed, and an altogether new substance is obtained, to which the discoverer (Mr. Stanford) has given the name of *Algin*. It closely resembles horn, and has all the properties of strong glue, and of a transparent starch; and has already been applied to many practical uses,—in stiffening fabrics, in applying carbon to the lining of boilers, &c. &c. The weed from which it has been extracted is known as *cellulose*. It is bleached, to a fairly pure white, and being dried and pressed, forms a rough material, which seems likely to prove an excellent substitute for rags in the hands of the paper manufacturers. The other processes, to which weed is now subjected to obtain its salts, leave a large residuum of charcoal, which has a value of its own as an effectual and economical deodoriser. Altogether the prospects of sea-weed are looking up, and there seems good reason to hope that the Hebridean Isles may yet find a source of wealth in reaping the self-sown crops, of these their great natural harvest-fields.

Of all beautiful sandy shores, I know none to compare with the golden beach of Macnahanish Bay, where the broad firm strand stretches for miles along the coast, making the pleasantest drive that can well be imagined, close to the water's-edge, where the sand is hard and firm, and the rippling wavelets run up past the horses' feet, and retreat again, till you become giddy with watching them, and are fain to look away across the mellow sea, to where the sun is sinking behind the hills of Islay, and the five blue peaks of Jura. This drive along the sands being the shortest road to Tarbert, it is not only on fine days that it proves tempting, and sometimes

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Letheby's chemical analysis shows that sea-weed contains an average of 60 per cent. of mucilaginous matter, and from 9 to 15 per cent. of "flesh-producing" material.

the well-trained horses, who have never felt a whip, but work gladly in obedience to their master's kind voice, have a difficult task to make their way, with blinding surf almost bewildering them.

Once, only once, the beautiful shore proved treacherous. A long line of shingle had been thrown up, by an unusually violent tempest, and great beds of wrack lay between that and the sea, till day by day, fresh layers of sand were blown up, and washed up, and it all looked smooth and firm as usual. But underneath, the hidden weed lay rotting, and as we drove confidently along, suddenly we found ourselves sinking lower and lower into dangerous quicksands. The good steeds knew the danger, and with violent effort dragged us out into the deeper water; and so, got round the perilous bank, which stretched far along the shore. Happily the sea was a dead calm, or we should have had a poor chance of escape, especially as we had tied the children into the carriage with a series of intricate knots, to prevent their jumping out to catch jelly-fish and such-like treasures.

## CHAPTER II.

## FROM CAMPBELTON TO OBAN.

"The Isles, where dewy morning weaves  
 Her chaplet, with the tints that twilight leaves ;  
 Where late the sun, scarce vanished from the sight,  
 And his bright pathway graced the short-lived night."

Isles of Gigah and Islay—Meaning of Tarbert—Legend of the Whirlpool—Isles of Klachnave, Oronsay, and Colonsay—Oban—Dunolly—Dunstaffnage—Seals—Old Tombs—White Stones—A Lake Village—Serpent-shaped Mound—American and other Reptile-shaped Mounds—Gaelic Serpent Lore.

REAL Argyleshire rain ! Drenching, pouring, soaking, pitiless rain !  
 How it did rain !

After such a spell of sunshine, why should it have chosen this very morning to begin this cruel work, just as we started for a forty-six mile drive, first across the hills to Campbelton, and thence to Tarbert, along a coast whose beauty we had already proved, and with which we had vainly hoped to refresh our memories ? Our conveyance was the lumbering old coach which still runs between Campbelton and Tarbert, and it was suggested that we should go inside ; but, thinking the remedy worse than the disease, we preferred testing our good and trusty waterproofs ; a panoply without which they would be rash indeed who could venture to set foot in the dominions of His Hieland Glory, the great MacCailian Môr, and brave his lawless rain.

It was some consolation that the worthies at the various stages, for once, allowed that it was something more than a "fine saft day," and condescended to take refuge under their own roofs, and leave drowned understrappers to do all the work; while good John, our gentle Jehu, whose aversion to the whip was as great as that of our host at Losset, soothed and coaxed obedience out of the most unpromising quadrupeds. "Steady, my wee pet," to a great raw-boned brute, with a wicked eye. "Noo, my bonnie lassie," to a long-legged, clumsy old cow. A very master in the art of kindly flattery, is this master of the ribbons.

As we drove along the coast, we had a farewell peep of the little isle of Gigah, the burial-place of the Macneils, a meet haven for these turbulent island lords, with the wildest sea-waves for ever guarding their rest. On several of the old tombs we can still trace the rudely-carved two-handed sword, half hidden by a coating of warm dark moss.

Some relics, too, there are, of yet more ancient days. Great cairns, near which stand tall rough monoliths, once, doubtless, suggesting names that in their day were deemed immortal, but of which all tradition has long since been lost. At one place there is a group of three such old cairns, and one great monolith, which has been carved into the semblance of a cross, by some zealous Christian of old. Near this is a well, which the Macneils of yore had only to stir, if they were wind-bound, and straightway a favourable gale arose, to speed them on their course.

A little further lie the low shores of the large island of Islay, rich in traces of old ecclesiastical buildings, no less than fourteen chapels having been founded by the Lords of the Isles. In the churchyard of Kil-arrow there is a remarkable gravestone, with the figure of a warrior with a conical head-dress, and a tunic reaching to the knees. At his side is a dirk, and in his hand a sword. Near this stone is another bearing a large sword, and a garland of leaves—a Hebridean equivalent for a laurel crown.

The burial-ground of Kildalton is marked by two large rudely-sculptured stone crosses.

Of more ancient interest is the tomb of Yla, or Eila, a Danish



princess, who has bequeathed her name to the island, and also to some of its daughters. A high conical green hill above the Bay of Knock, seemed a fitting tumulus of nature's own building, so here the Danish lady was buried, and the spot is marked by two great upright stones, called "The Stones of Islay."

Cairns and barrows have been excavated in various parts of the isle, and treasures of the usual sort, such as brass fibulæ, stone celts, and flint arrow-heads have gone to enrich museums.

Here, too, on the brink of the river Laggan, "Brian of Ila" was buried, standing upright, and holding in his hand a spear, such as that which he used to dart at the salmon. The ruling passion, you see, was strong in death. In Islay, beside Loch Finlagan, one (or more) of the old Lords of the Isles held his court; and standing on a big stone seven feet square, received the homage of all his vassals, a ceremony graced by the sanction of the Church; "for," says the old chronicle, "the Bishop of Argyle and seven priests did anoint and crown him king of the Isles, placing his father's sword in his hand, whereupon he swore to protect the Islesmen, and do justice to all his subjects."

It is curious to note the strange quibble by which this peninsula of Cantyre came to be included among the Hebrides. A very narrow neck of land, such as that which connects this with the mainland, is generally called Tarbat or Tarbert, from two old words: *Tarruing*, to draw, and *Bata*, a boat; because in some cases it saved both time and trouble to drag the boats across the isthmus, rather than sail round the land. This was especially true of the Mull of Cantyre, whose difficult navigation and fearful storms were so dreaded, that vessels of nine or ten tons were frequently drawn by horses out of the west loch to that on the east (a distance of barely a mile), thus avoiding the long and dangerous sail all round the peninsula. This fact was taken advantage of by the Norwegian king, Magnus, "the barefoot king," when Donald-Bane of Scotland was forced to cede to him the Western Isles, including *all places that could be surrounded in a boat*. Placing himself in the stern of a boat, he held the rudder, was drawn over this narrow track, and thus took possession of the Mull.

In olden days the isles were quite independent of the mainland, and were ruled by such piratical chiefs, that at length Harold Haarfager determined to annex them all, as far south as the Isle of Man. They continued nominally subject to Norway till 1226, when they were transferred to Scotland (not, however, as a very peaceful possession, as it is somewhere about this time that we hear of the King of Man making over the Sudereys to Somerled). About eighty years later, the whole were seized by one chief, whose private property they continued for 200 years, when James V. finally reconquered them.

Well, it poured without intermission till we reached Tarbert, where there still remain the ruins of a castle built by the Bruce. Thence we took the steamer to Lochgilphead, where a smaller steamboat was waiting to take us through the Crinal Canal, and we sat on the deck to catch a glimpse of old Duntroon Castle,—but it looked grey and cold and wet, and not a bit like the same place where we used to sail, or row, or scramble in the sunny summer evenings.

At Crinan we again changed steamers, and still the rain poured on: "It was never weary." We knew that on our left lay the Islands of Scarba and Jura, between which rush the mighty tides, which swirl and roar round a hidden reef in mid-channel, whence shelving rocks on every side, project far under the water, and so create the whirlpool of Corrieveckan, "The cauldron of the foaming tide," which boils and ferments as the impetuous currents meet, till the waves are heaped up like pyramids, which break and spout in dashing spray. Sometimes this wild ferment makes the whole sea white with foam, and then the people say that the Caillach (the old hag) has put on her kerchief, and any ship rash enough to approach would meet its certain doom.

The legend of these tumultuous waters tell that the word Bhreacan (Corrie-Bhreacan), which some have translated as "foaming stream," was really the name of a brave young Danish prince, who loved a daughter of the Lord of the Isles, and desired to woo and win her. Her father did not favour his suit, yet, not willing to offend the King of Lochlin, he answered craftily, that the prince should indeed have his daughter, providing he would prove his

courage and his skill as a seaman, by anchoring his galley for three days and three nights in the dread whirlpool.

The young prince, nothing daunted, returned to Lochlin to consult with his wise men as to the best means of safety. They bade him take three cables,—one of hemp, one of wool, and one of woman's hair. The hempen cable and the woollen one were easy to find, but as to the third, every hair of which must come from the head of a maiden of spotless fame, it demanded such sacrifice as few damsels would care to make. However the prince was beloved, and the fame of his beauty and of his brave deeds in love and war, had reached the bower of many a Danish maid. So the daughters of the land cut off their long fair locks, and a cable was woven thereof, which should resist the mightiest tempest that ever raged in that seething cauldron.

Then the prince returned to the father of his love and announced his readiness to do his will. He anchored in the whirlpool. The first day the hempen cable broke. The second day the woollen one parted. The third day came, and the gift of the maidens of Lochlin still held its ground. The young prince was full of gladness, for his triumph seemed nigh at hand. But alas ! for that law which makes the strength of the mightiest cable equal only to its weakest link. There was one fair tress binding him to the anchor of his hope which had been shorn from the head of one whose fame was no longer without blemish. So the resistless might of unspotted purity was not there to bind the raging waters, and the last rope parted, and the ship was sucked down in the mad whirling vortex,—down, down, down, to the unfathomable depths of ocean.

But the body of the prince was brought to land by his faithful dog, and dragged to a cave that bears his name, where a little cairn still marks the spot where Bhreacan was buried. The dog returned to the water, doubtless seeking some other friend, and he perished in a lesser whirlpool between the Isles of Scarba and Lunga, and that Sound is still known as the Grey Dog's Slap.

To the north-west of Scarba lies the little island of Elachnave, where there remain traces of some of the very earliest monastic

buildings, situated near an ancient cemetery where the graves are only marked by roughest wave-worn rocks, one of which bears a rudely graven cross. There are also two beehive cells of slate, covered with grass, perhaps the humble homes of holy men of old.

Beyond Jura lie the sister isles, which, in memory of St. Columba and his companion St. Oran, bears the names of Oronsay and Colonsay, their respective sizes bearing due proportion to the fame of the two men, Colonsay being much the larger island of the two. Both are hilly, though of no great height, and are noted for the richness of their pasture. Next to Iona, these isles possess more extensive remains of religious houses than any others in the Hebridean group. They have also vestiges of prehistoric times, as Oronsay has several tumuli. The ruins are those of ecclesiastical buildings, founded by the Lords of the Isles about the fourteenth century. On Oronsay stood a monastery, of which there remain some cloisters of a very peculiar angular character. Within the priory are several sculptured tombs, and a little apart stands a tall round-headed cross.

The abbey connected with this monastery stood on the larger isle of Colonsay, but it has been entirely destroyed, though the ruins of some smaller chapels remain. St. Oran's cell has disappeared within the memory of persons still living. To him was dedicated the Church of Killouran. Unfortunately the four hundred inhabitants of the isle have not been endowed with a due reverence for these sacred ruins, which have been treated as a convenient quarry. Oronsay, on which there is but one inhabited house, fares better, and its multitudinous rabbits are no foes to antiquarians, so the old ruins are here left to the slow progress of calm decay.

After the Reformation multitudes of these small churches were allowed to fall into ruin, and a very irregular system of Church services was substituted. Thus, in the more distant isles, the minister, on his occasional visits, would celebrate the marriages and baptisms of perhaps two or three years. On these occasions it was very important to have the lads baptized before the lassies, for should this order be accidentally inverted, the lassie who was

christened out of her turn was certain to grow a beard ! Till very recent years this was firmly believed, so far south as Stirlingshire, where, within my own memory, it was alleged by the church officer, as a reason why the laird's infant daughter must on no account be baptized till after several collier laddies. So strongly was this separation of the sexes insisted on, that I know of one old font belonging to the church at Birnie near Elgin, which was actually divided in two by a plate of iron let into the stone, that the water for the baptism of males, might not be mixed with that for females. This old font having been discarded in favour of the modern bason, was for many years left lying neglected in the kirkyard, but I do not know whether it proved treasure-trove to any antiquarian.

The minister's greetings from these unbaptized little heathens were sometimes striking. One child on being sprinkled with cold water exclaimed passionately, "De'il be in your fingers !" which, you will allow, was a stronger form of remonstrance, than the stick of barley-sugar, which we occasionally see employed in infantile resistance to the means of grace ! It was, however, well in keeping with the character given to a West Highland village by its new pastor. "Eh ! it's a pitiful thing to see children that can neither *waalk* nor *taalk*, running about the streets, cursing and swearing !" It sounds as if he must have had a dash of the Emerald Isle, but he was described as being "just as Highland as a peat."

In these remote corners of the earth, Church ceremonies are sometimes considerably affected by wind and weather. There are many cases when one minister has charge of several small flocks, and has to divide his care of them as best he can ; sometimes he has to row across a dangerous ferry or a sea-loch, against wind and tide, to reach the congregation awaiting him on the other side. Sometimes all the efforts of the strong arms that row him are unavailing, and after battling for hours without being able to effect a landing, they have to make the best of their way back to the island whence they started, leaving the little flock to disperse at their leisure. Even where no arm of the sea intervenes between the minister and his parochial work, a swollen river will prove quite as effectual a barrier, and I have heard stories that reminded

me forcibly of the form of baptism practised by St. Francis Xavier, when, sailing up the Indian river, he sprinkled holy water with a long pole on the astonished people, who assembled on either bank to see him pass.

Dr. Chalmers told a story of a Highland minister having been summoned to baptize an infant, whose parents lived on the other side of a small stream. When he reached the burn, he found it was in spate, and there were no means of getting across. He therefore shouted to the father to come down to the burn-side, and hold the infant (as the custom is, in Scotland). He, himself, procured a wooden scoop, which he dipped in the burn, and flung the water across, aiming at the bairn's face. But the stream was so wide that he repeatedly fell short of the mark; and the shout of "Weel! has it gotten any yet?" was reiterated again and again, before a satisfactory answer enabled him to conclude the service! This I believe to be a fact of the present century.

All this time we were passing through scenery which we believed to be bewilderingly lovely, if we could but have seen it, instead of the sheets of grey rain, which poured down incessantly from the heavy clouds. But towards evening, as we neared Oban—"the quiet little harbour," as its name implies,—the dark storm drifted away, and the sun shone forth in penitent beauty, changing the whole face of nature. Instead of earth, sea, and sky being all of one leaden hue, the scene was now flooded with tender rainbow-coloured light; fairy islands in the far distance seemed to float ethereally on the opal-tinted sea, and the great hills of Mull appeared as if rising from the waves, like some pale spirit, faintly visible through the tremulous evening light.

Just beyond the town rises the stern old Castle of Dunolly, perched on a grey projecting craig, which, rising abruptly from the shore, commands the harbour on either side; a strong tower of defence in olden days, and one which no foeman's galley could approach unseen. Now a picturesque garden nestles round the base of the craig, adding gem-like touches of colour to the flush of heather which lies in every cranny of the grey rock, while a background of green and gold foliage serves as a rich setting to the whole.

Near the base of the cliff one huge rock-boulder stands upright, as if placed there by some giant hand. This is known as the Dog's Stone, for here it was that Fingal was wont to tie his faithful dog Bran, in ages long before Macdougals or Campbells had taken possession of the land. You know this grim old fortress of Dunolly was the eerie where the Macdougals of Lorn, eagle-like, built their nest overhanging the waves. They were lineal descendants of the first Dougal, Lord of the Isles, son of the great Somerled, whose place of burial we noted at Saddell. The old castle is now in ruins, later generations having preferred to build themselves a modern home in a more sheltered nook, where, among other family treasures, they still retain the far-famed brooch of Lorn, snatched from the Bruce, by their ancestor John of Lorn.

Resolved to make the most of so beautiful an evening, we wandered along the shore in the direction of Gallanach, by far the most lovely, and yet the least frequented, road in the neighbourhood of Oban, winding beneath grey crags, close to the sea; and disclosing at every turn, some fresh vision of beauty,—dreamy isles, or the nearer mainland.

The dewy freshness of a sweet spring morning tempted us forth betimes, to explore another fine old ruin,—the Castle of Dunstaffnage, a far more imposing mass of building than Dunolly, though lacking the grandeur of its rocky ramparts. But the low grassy shore on which it stands, is washed all round by the blue sea-loch, so that at high tide it is in fact an island, and the waters, coming close in shore, serve as a mirror to reflect the grey weather-beaten fortress, only rendering its image in mellow tones than the stern walls ever wear in reality.

Nor is its beauty lessened, when the receding waters expose the dark rocks fringed with golden sea-weed,—rocks on which you may sometimes surprise a whole family of seals basking in the warm sunshine,—a grey old grandmother surrounded by her children and grandchildren, the latter dark in colour as the dry wrack on which they lie. Occasionally the family-party includes a nursing mother and her baby! These little additions to the family only occur once a year, and rarely exceed one at a time, though twins are not un-

known. The mother-seal seeks the most secluded spot she can discover, and then comes ashore to give birth to her little one, which almost immediately takes to the water, swimming bravely. This happy family will slip shyly into the water at your approach, but perhaps you may wile them back with some plaintive song, for they have keen ears for music, and will brave even the dreaded human presence for the sake of some favourite melody. Often, while sailing on this very loch, we have tested this curious fact, and watched the black shining heads appearing from time to time, as these music-loving creatures swam in the wake of our galley, attracted by the sound of songs, or of old Scotch tunes played on an accordion.

Talking of "grey old grandmothers," I remember one patriarchal seal, who, in her old age, had turned so silvery white, that as she lay on the rocks close in shore, we all with one accord agreed that it must be a sheep which had fallen from the cliffs overhead. As we sailed nearer, the likeness seemed to increase, even to the experienced eyes of our older sportsmen; so we determined to put off a boat and rescue the poor sufferer who lay so still and apparently helpless, only from time to time, turning her head uneasily at our approach. It was not till we were within easy shot (a shot which, of course, was never fired) that the old lady condescended to lift herself up, look down on us in calm surprise, and with a wriggle and a plunge, disappeared into the cool clear waves, leaving the invaders very much astonished at their own lack of discrimination.

In a cool shady glade, a stone's throw from the castle, stands a ruined chapel, ivy-clad, where many a carved stone tells of the sleepers who have here found so calm a resting-place after life's turmoil—a lonely spot, seldom trodden by human foot, but haunted by white-winged sea-birds that float spirit-like in mid air, sometimes alighting on the hallowed ground, and peering about inquisitively, as they walk solemnly over tombs of Vikings and Chiefs of old.

Apart from the exceeding natural beauty which lends such a charm to all this coast, there is the special interest of countless old legends, which connect not only these grey ruins, but all the country



round, with the successive holders of the soil,—those divers races who by turns have swept over the land, each leaving their little mark behind them.

The very name of this district—Beregonium—falls strangely on the ear, accustomed rather to the sound of Celtic or of Norse than to such classic old Latin, and reminds us of the days when Roman invaders, having driven out the earlier settlers, seem to have recognized the importance of this position as a key alike to the Hebrides and the western coast. Here, in the massive headland (which, jutting into the sea, commands both plain and ocean), they found a position so strongly fortified by Nature's ramparts of rugged rock, as to require but small aid from human skill to convert it into an impregnable encampment.

Of the original inhabitants, little is of course known, but this spot is believed to have been one of the principal settlements of the Dalriads, if not the capital of their kingdom. Certain it is, that many of the oldest legends of Ossian cluster round this immediate neighbourhood, where Fingal is said to have held his court and shared with his warriors in wild feasts and frays.

From Dunstaffnage we overlook a desolate tract of wide flat moorland, known as Loch Nell Moss, lying between the blue waters of Loch Etive and the broad Atlantic.

Here various traces have recently been discovered of the homes and graves of our Pagan ancestors, suggesting dim and shadowy visions of their life in far remote ages. Half way across the Moss rises a large cairn, built of rounded water-worn stones, and surrounded by stunted trees. This has recently been excavated ; and in the heart of the tumulus were found two megalithic chambers, containing human remains and urns. Also divers white quartz stones, such as various Pagan nations were wont to bury with their dead—possibly as emblems of immortality and of sin forgiven or cancelled, as when the Greeks of old symbolized a release from some obligation by the giving or receiving of a white stone,—a custom probably alluded to in the book of Revelation in the promise, " To him that overcometh . . . . I will give a white stone, and in the stone a new name written."

In the present instance, the white stones were arranged in pairs, on a ledge of rock projecting above the urns, a single stone being placed at each end of this double row; another single white pebble was found inside one of the urns.

A considerable number of similar pebbles of white quartz have recently been discovered in various old British tombs on the Isle of Cambrae, as also within the Sacred Circle on the Isle of Man; a circle, by the way, which from time immemorial has been held in such reverence, that to this day the Parliament of the island is there convened. These pebbles were also found in most of the old tombs recently excavated in the neighbourhood of Dundee, in fact, so frequent was their presence, that it was common for the workmen employed in excavating to exclaim, "Here are the two stones! now we will get the bones." Rock crystal is sometimes found in lieu of the white quartz.

Akin to these pebbles, in their symbolic connection with the religious and funereal rites of our ancestors, are the conical masses of white quartz found entombed with human remains in tumuli at Inverary, Dundee, Letcombe Castle in Berks and Maiden Castle near Weymouth—precisely similar to those found in excavations at Nineveh (now to be seen in the British Museum), with this exception, that on the latter are carved representations of serpents, and of the sun and moon.

Turning from these dwellings of the dead, to the sunny shores of Loch Etive, we next come on traces of a lake village, of considerable size, and in fair preservation. Here, on removing accumulations of peat-moss, which would seem to have been the growth of twenty, or perhaps thirty centuries, a series of oval palings were found, still surrounded by wooden stakes, which doubtless once supported conical thatched roofs, like those dwellings of the old Gauls described by Strabo as circular, with lofty tapering roofs of straw.

However suggestive to the initiated, are these slight remains of the homes of their ancestors, they offer small attraction to the general public, compared with the hints of the ancestral worship, recently discovered in Glen Feochan in the rival district of Loch Nell, which (though bearing the same name as the Moss aforesaid), lies





about three miles on the other side of Oban—a lonely lake, on whose brink lies a huge Serpent-shaped Mound.

The carriage-road winds along the shore, and through broken hummocky ground, in some places clothed with grass, in others with heather and bracken. But for the presence of one of the few initiated, who had fortunately accompanied us, we should assuredly have passed close below the heathery mound which forms the serpent's tail (in fact the road has been cut right across the tip of it), without ever suspecting that it differed from the surrounding moorland.

Nevertheless it is a very remarkable object, and one, moreover, which rises conspicuously from the flat grassy plain, that stretches for some distance on either side, with scarcely an undulation, save two artificial circular mounds, in one of which lie several large stones, forming a cromlech. These circles are situated a short distance to the south, to the right of the Reptile, but too far to be shown in the sketch.

Finding ourselves thus unconsciously in the very presence of the Great Dragon, we hastened to improve our acquaintance, and in a couple of minutes had scrambled on to the ridge which forms his back-bone, and thence perceived that we were standing on an artificial mound three hundred feet in length, forming a double curve like a huge letter S, and wonderfully perfect in anatomical outline. This we perceived the more perfectly on reaching the head, which lies at the western end, whence diverge small ridges, which may have represented the paws of the reptile. On the head rests a circle of stones, supposed to be emblematic of the solar disc, and exactly corresponding with the solar circle as represented on the head of the mystic serpents of Egypt and Phœnicia, and in the great American Serpent Mound.

Previous to 1871 there still remained in the centre of this circle, some traces of an altar, which, thanks to the depredations of cattle and herd-boys, have since wholly disappeared. The people of the neighbourhood have an old tradition that in remote ages this was a place of public execution, and from various analogies in the customs of other nations, it seems likely enough that this was the case, and

that this wild glen, may have been to many, the valley of the shadow of death, whether their lives were taken judicially or offered in sacrifice.

The circle was excavated on the 12th October, 1871, and within it were found three large stones, forming a chamber, which contained human bones, charcoal, and *charred hazel-nuts*. Surely the spirits of our Pagan ancestors must rejoice to see how faithfully we, their descendants, continue to burn our hazel-nuts on Hallowe'en, their old autumnal Fire Festival, though our modern divination is practised only with reference to such a trivial matter as the faith of sweethearts! A flint instrument was also found, minutely serrated at the edge; nevertheless, it was at once evident, on opening the cairn, that the place had already been ransacked, probably in secret, by treasure-seekers, as there is no tradition of any previous excavation for scientific purposes having been made here.

On the removal of the peat-moss and heather from the ridge of the serpent's back, it was found that the whole length of the spine was carefully constructed with regularly and symmetrically-placed stones at such an angle as to throw off rain; an adjustment to which we doubtless owe the preservation, or at least the perfection, of this most remarkable relic. To those who know how slow is the growth of peat-moss, even in damp and undrained places, the depth to which it has here attained (though in a dry and thoroughly exposed situation and raised from seventeen to twenty feet above the level of the surrounding moss), tells of many a long century of silent undisturbed growth, since the days when the Serpent's spine was the well-worn path daily trodden by reverent feet.

The spine is, in fact, a long narrow causeway, made of large stones, set like the vertebræ of some huge animal. They form a ridge sloping off in an angle at each side, which is continued downwards with an arrangement of smaller stones, suggestive of ribs. The mound has been formed in such a position that the worshipper standing at the altar would naturally look eastward, directly along the whole length of the Great Reptile, and across the dark lake, to the triple peaks of Ben Cruachan. This position must have been carefully selected, as from no other point are the three peaks visible.

This reverence for some Triune object, whether a triple-pointed hill, the junction of three rivers, or the neighbourhood of three lakes, seems to have been a marked characteristic of almost every ancient faith, and we may well believe that the Druids were not likely to pass by a great mountain, with its threefold summit towering heavenward, as if to draw thither the eyes and hearts of a race who were careful to consecrate all such natural types in their worship of Nature's God.

Attention was first called to this mound by Mr. Phené, and it was a knowledge of this tendency that first led him to examine minutely all the least-trodden glens in the neighbourhood of any such natural features, as for instance round the Eildon and Arran hills—seeking for traces which should mark the spot as sacred; and in each case, among other so-called Druidic remains, he has found just such mounds of reptile form as he was in search of—none, however, so remarkable as this strange old Serpent, which for so many centuries has lain here undisturbed, as if guarding the valley.

All of these are more or less akin to the Reptile Mounds discovered in Ohio and Wisconsin by Messrs. Squier and Lapham, always in connection with sacrificial or sepulchral remains. One of these in particular is of an unmistakably serpentine form; and the position of the altar in the circle or oval at the head of the Serpent is identical with that of this Argyleshire mound, the head in each case lying towards the west. The American mound is, however, on a larger scale than its Scotch cousin, being altogether a thousand feet long. It points towards three rivers, thus indicating the reverence for the triple symbol,—another instance of which occurs on the hill known as Lapham's Peak, on whose lofty summit three artificial mounds were found, carefully constructed of stone and earth,—materials which must have been transported thither with very great labour.

Whatever may have been the origin of these huge serpent-shaped mounds, their existence seems to suggest a clue to the meaning of various ancient legends concerning enormous serpents which covered acres of land; the very fact of their dimensions

being given in terms of land-measurement seeming to imply that the writers merely alluded in poetic terms to Ophite or Draconite temples where these symbols were worshipped.

Thus we hear of Dragons in Mauritania so great that they were covered with grass. Alexander the Great was taken to see a Sacred Dragon five acres in extent, lying in a low valley, surrounded by a high wall: to it the Indians offered sacrifices of flocks and herds. Strabo mentions two such Dragons in India, one measuring eighty cubits in length, the other a hundred and forty. And on the plains of Syria, near the land of Snake-adoring Hivites, lay a Serpent about an acre in length, of such bulk that two horsemen riding on either side could not see each other, while its mouth was so great that a man might ride in thereat—an experiment not likely to be tried were the reptile a living creature!

But all these are dwarfed by the legendary Dragon of Damascus, which is described as a serpent covering fifty acres of land! a description which Bryant interprets as including a grove and garden round the Ophite temple. He also quotes Ovid's account of the serpent Python, as covering several acres, alluding surely, not to the serpent itself, but to that temple of Delphi which Apollo built with great stones on the spot where he had slain the Python—a temple which Stukeley infers to have been similar to our own great temple of Avebury or Aubury in Wiltshire, i. e. two small double circles within one large circle whence started two wavy serpentine avenues, forming the Ophite symbol; and although his theories on this subject are now commonly held in ridicule, it should at least be remembered that the form was far more perfect in his day (1723) than it now is, many great stones having been broken up by farmers in his time, and this ruthless work of destruction, still continuing mercilessly when Deane wrote in 1830, so that where Stukeley counted a hundred upright stones, Deane saw only eight, and similar devastation was everywhere evident.

In our own British Isles comparatively few traces of Serpent-worship are to be found; yet, considering how commonly the adoration of Sun and Serpent are linked together—that both are said to have been revered by the Druids—and that in all countries where



the worship of the Serpent has prevailed (as in Greece, Italy and Hindo-stan) he was, or is, always recognized as a Corn-god,<sup>1</sup> to whom special-offerings must be made at seed-time and in harvest—it is worthy of note that, till within the last century all manner of customs for the good of the crops, were kept up, on the days which in olden times were observed as Sun-festivals.

Moreover, in the shadowy mythology of early Britain, we hear of a god Hu, who was worshipped as the Dragon-ruler of the world, and whose car was drawn by serpents: there was also a goddess Ceridwen answering to Ceres, who had a car similarly yoked with a serpentine team.<sup>2</sup>

An inference of the same sort may be drawn from a very curious old Bardic poem, concerning Uther Pendragon, the Wonderful Dragon,<sup>3</sup> descriptive of the religious rites of the early English, wherein the worshipper, while calling on Bel, the Dragon King, describes himself as *making the orthodox turn sunwise*, first round the consecrated lake, then round the sanctuary, whereon is depicted the *gliding king*; while within the sacred circle of huge stones, the Great Dragon (evidently a living serpent) moves round over the vessels containing the drink-offering—whence it may be inferred that

<sup>1</sup> Even in the far away isolated Fijian Isles the Serpent-God Raitumaibulu was worshipped as Lord of Life, and God of the Crops.

<sup>2</sup> *Ceridwen*. This was the goddess in whose honour our ancestors used to dress up an image made of corn, and crowned with flowers, which was carried home triumphantly with the last load of corn; while the reapers sang the song of harvest home, to the music of pipes and drums.

A trace of this old custom still lingers in some of the northern counties of England, where the "Carn," or corn baby, still figures at the harvest-home, which is commonly called the Carn-Supper—a name apparently not derived from Corn, but from Carneus, under which name the Sun-God was sometimes worshipped by the Celts (as in the far East, Krishna the Sun-God, is always worshipped as Carna, "the Radiant One"). This name is preserved in the Armoric temple of Carnac, while in the Gaelic we have Carnach,—and sacred bonfires were Carn-fires. Hence too, the Roman Spring-festival of the Carnival, with its mad mirth. The alteration of the word to Carne-vale, "adieu to flesh," was simply the usual expedient of adapting Pagan feasts to Christian uses.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in 'The Worship of the Serpent,' by the Rev. J. B. Deane.

the British Druids, like the Syrian Ophites, and Egyptian worshippers of Isis and Bacchus, encouraged the serpent to glide over the gifts on the altar.

Mr. Deane notices, as a curious coincidence, that the word *draig*, here translated dragon, signifies also the Supreme God. Also that, in one of these poems the priest enumerates his own titles as a Druid, a Prophet, a Serpent. Hence it seems probable, that the numerous legends which tell of the early Christian saints having conquered serpents (as when St. Hilda changed all the Yorkshire snakes into Ammonites, when St. Patrick banished them from Ireland, and St. Columba from Iona, while St. Keyna changed those of Somersetshire into upright stones), had reference to the conversion or expulsion of their worshippers.

It may be, that the great mound lying before us, beside the dark mountain tarn, may have been just such a temple as this old bard describes, and that within the circle of stones, a living serpent may in truth have glided over the offerings of a people, taught by these priests of an Oriental faith to unite this worship with that of the great Day Star; a people who day by day gathered round this strange altar, while watching for the first streak of dawn in the eastern sky—the first glowing ray which, gilding Ben Cruachan's triple peak, told them that the great Life-giving Sun-god had once more arisen to gladden the earth.

Perhaps we ought rather to say Sun-goddess, inasmuch as Sun and Mountain are alike feminine in the Gaelic tongue.

It is a strange vision that rises before us, as our fancy pictures this gloomy valley beside the dark waters, not silent and solitary as now, but thronged with worshippers, congregating from every remote corner of hill and valley to witness the awful sacrifices which white-robed priests with shaven crowns, offered upon the mystic altar, in presence of the Mountain and the Dragon.

Whatever may have been the true origin of this snake reverence in Britain, certain it is that in countless old Gaelic legends of the West Coast and of the Hebrides, the serpent holds a place of such importance, as we can hardly imagine to have been acquired by such puny representatives of the race as are to be found on ou

British moors, though we are bound to confess that Ben Cruachan does give shelter to an unwonted multitude of small adders. And although Hugh Miller tells of the existence of fossil Saurians in the Isle of Eigg, we can hardly give our ancestors credit for pushing their geological researches so far, or for tracing their traditions from such pre-Adamite sources.—It certainly is remarkable that almost all these legends are also to be found in the folk-lore of India and Persia.

Thus the story of how Fraoch, for the sake of his golden-haired love, fought with, and killed, and was killed by, a terrible water-snake which infested Loch Awe, has its counterpart in the history of Krishna, the Indian Sun-god, who for love of the pretty milkmaids, fought a terrible battle *à l'outrance* with the black water-serpent, which poisoned the blue waters of the sacred Jumna, coming up thence to devour the herds which pastured between Muttra and Bindrabund. More fortunate than Fraoch, Krishna slew his foe without receiving dire injury himself, though his heel was bitten in the conflict.

When the dragon was dead, his carcase dried up, and became a mountain, whereon children played in peace, a happy termination to the story, and one which possibly alluded to some serpent or dragon-shaped mound, which may have existed on the shores of the Jumna, just as this does here, on the brink of Loch Nell. The Indian story goes on to tell that men and animals afterwards sought refuge with Krishna within the serpent's head—a story which seems to refer to some custom of sacrifice, or possibly of self-immolation, and which tallies curiously with the Gaelic tradition before alluded to, which points out the Argyleshire Serpent Mound as an ancient place of execution or sacrifice.

Very remarkable is the place of the Serpent in the Medicinal lore of almost all lands. In Cashmere, for instance (where in bygone times the worship of the Naga—the Divine-Snake—was formerly so prevalent, that in the time of Akbar, A.D. 1560, there were in that kingdom forty-five temples devoted exclusively to his service, while in seven hundred others there were carved images of him, which received due share of adoration), the descendants of

the Naga tribes are to this day remarkable for their medical skill, and possession of healing arts and nostrums, which their ancestors (in common with Esculapius), received from the health-giving Serpent.

The same skill in healing, is attributed to him, by many nations. The Celts acquired their medical lore by drinking serpent-broth; the Mexicans hung snake-bones round the neck of the sick; in Pegu, at the birth of a child, a snake's tongue is tied within a tiny bell and hung round the baby's neck as a preventive of sickness and harm. And in many parts of India it is customary, in cases of illness, to make a serpent of clay or metal, *literally* a brazen serpent, and offer sacrifice to it on behalf of the sufferer.

In various Gaelic legends a white snake figures in this connection. Thus, when a nest of seven serpents is discovered, containing six brown adders and *one pure white one*, the latter caught and boiled, confers the gift of omniscience, on the first man who tastes of this serpent "bree" (broth), and who thereafter, becomes the wisest of doctors. This identical story occurs also in the German folk-lore. I have also heard it asserted that to this day both Arabs and Hindoos eat the heart and liver of serpents, hoping thereby to acquire a knowledge of the language of animals.

In all old Gaelic legends great reverence was always due to the White Snake, which was described as the king of snakes. It is believed by some of the old Highlanders still to exist in the land—a faith which is occasionally confirmed by the appearance of a silvery gray specimen. In Ceylon a silvery white snake is sometimes found, which the natives likewise recognize as the King of the Cobras, and venerate exceedingly. I have myself seen one of these, the sanctity of which was duly impressed on me. The Arabs of Mount Ararat have also a story of a great white snake, and of a royal race of serpents, to which all others do homage.

One after another these quaint legends rose to our minds as we looked down on the grim old Guardian of Glen Feochan, revealing himself alternately as a thing of darkness and of light, in every changing aspect of the hour. Now and then a sharp sudden shower swept over the hills, casting deep cloud-shadows on land and loch;

then the sun once more burst forth, shedding a golden glory over the purples, browns, and golds, of the many-tinted moorland.

But the dragon cared neither for sun nor showers. He lay still in his place, couching by the waters, and keeping ceaseless vigil, as he had already done for centuries untold, and as doubtless he will continue to do, till some mighty convulsion shall shake the strong foundations of the earth, and bury him beneath the tumbled fragments of the hills.

## CHAPTER III.

### IONA.

Sacred Isles—The Druid's Holy Isle—Brigit, the Fire Goddess—Traces of Pagan Customs—The 360 Crosses—Rude Stone Monuments—360 Sacred Stones at Mecca—Black Stones—Magic Crystals—Solar Turns—St. Columba—His Work—His Death—Tonsure—Book of Battles—Jacob's Pillow—The Reilig Orain—The Nunnery—Massacre of the Monks—The Ruins—The Inn—Jackdaws—Hill of Dunii—Druidic Circle—The Bay of the Boat—Pagan Baptism.

AMONG the very varied phases of ecclesiastical life, which we find in various corners of the earth, there is one which seems to me to be especially attractive, wherever found—from a romantic and picturesque point of view: I allude to those Holy Isles which representatives of divers creeds, in widely-distant countries, have selected as their homes—the centres from which to spread their particular form of religious teaching.

Such are the sacred isles of the Buddhists, both of China and Japan—the Isle of Putoo, with its thousand quaint temples and monasteries, and innumerable throng of yellow or lilac-robed monks and priests, arrayed in vestments as elaborate as is the ritual they celebrate. Such too is the fascinating Holy Isle of Enoshima, to which all good Japanese make devout pilgrimage as often as they can allow themselves so pleasant a holiday. It is a most lovely spot, where all is pretty, and bright, and externally fascinating.

Very different is the charm which attaches to the Holy Isles of our own grey shores,—deeper seated, we would fain believe,—but by no means so apparent on the surface. Northumbria claims as her own, the Holy Isle of Lindisfarne, for ever hallowed by the presence of St. Cuthbert,—the beads of whose rosary, multiplying miraculously, still strew the storm-swept shores.<sup>1</sup>

Celebrated as was the Holy Isle of the East Coast, that of the West was still more famous, and I need hardly say that one of our chief objects in visiting the Hebrides was to make our pilgrimage from Oban to Iona, that little lonely isle round which such countless memories have clustered from all ages; once the Holy Isle of the Druids, and held most sacred by our Pagan forefathers, and in later ages, that is to say, some thirteen hundred years ago, so hallowed by the burning and shining light of that most energetic of saints,—Columba,—that all races of northern Europe made pilgrimage thither, in constant succession.

Though best known to us as Iona, the Island is spoken of in all the oldest Irish annals simply as I or Hii, Ia, Io, Hy, Y or Yi—with that remarkably varied spelling, so characteristic of old manuscripts,—a title denoting The Isle *par excellence*. Sometimes it was called Ithona, the Isle of the Waves, and sometimes Ishona, the Blessed Isle.

What attraction it can have offered, to induce the priests of the Sun to select it as their abode, it is hard to imagine, but, from time immemorial, it was known as the Sacred Isle of the Druids—the Inis Druineach or Nan Druichean, “the Druid’s Isle,” by which name it is known to the Highlanders of the present day. The Sons of Erin also retained the old name, and long after St. Columba’s time, they still spoke of the Holy Isle as the Eilean Drunish.

It certainly is a strangely perplexing mystery, to find an insignificant little island, in this remote corner of the earth, exalted to a position of such extraordinary honour,—an island situated in a

<sup>1</sup> St. Cuthbert’s beads. Single joints of the encrinite or stone-lily, washed from the fossiliferous rocks by the action of the waves. These sections are star-shaped, cruciform, or circular, and being naturally perforated, were highly prized, and strung as pilgrims’ rosaries.

region where the skies are proverbially grey—where rain and mist by turns enfold the land, and where, for weeks in succession, the great Sun does not vouchsafe one unclouded ray to gladden his most devout worshippers.

One can understand that zealous priests of the Sun-God should make their way to the mainland of Britain, as missionaries of every manner of creed, are content to devote their lives to the spread of the faith they hold true, no matter how uninviting their surroundings (and we cannot suppose that the white-robed Druid priests found our ancestors in their very cool full-dress of blue-wode, with the possible addition of a wolf-skin, altogether congenial companions!).

Whatever we know of these Druid teachers, seems to suggest their having been of Eastern origin, notwithstanding Caesar's statement that they were supposed to be an indigenous product of Britain, and that persons wishing to study their tenets generally went from Gaul to Britain for that purpose. We are told that they derived their name from the oak-groves in which they taught the people to worship.<sup>1</sup> Yet the golden knives with which they cut the sacred mistletoe were assuredly not indigenous, nor was the familiar use of the Greek alphabet, in which they recorded all public and private affairs, save such as related to their religion (for these they deemed it unhallowed to commit to writing)—a religion which emphatically taught the doctrines of immortality and of the transmigration of souls.

Surely the mere existence on these cold grey shores of a white-robed priesthood, crowned with garlands of oak-leaves, who ministered barefooted in unroofed temples open to every storm of heaven—astrologers, familiar with all the mysteries of the starry heavens—magicians who worked miracles by the use of magic crystals, and whose most potent talismans were ring-shaped "adder's stones" supposed to be formed of the crystallized saliva of serpents;—surely all these things bespeak the traditions of men who had originally wandered to Britain from some warmer, sunnier clime.

<sup>1</sup> The name of *Derwydd*, a Druid, is said to be derived from *derw*, which in Celtic (Welsh) signifies an oak-tree.



We may gather a hint to the same effect, from the symbols which we find sculptured on some ancient memorial stones of Pagan Britain. Not only do we find elaborately-carved crescents, discs, double wheels, linked together by a royal sceptre, such as might naturally suggest themselves as emblems of the sun, but we also find Fish, Geese, Serpents, and highly idealized Elephants and Camels,<sup>1</sup> the three last-named being creatures which would scarcely have presented themselves to the minds of our ancestors had not some tradition of these creatures reached them from the eastern world. It is, therefore, very remarkable to find that the Elephant, the Crescent, the Serpent, and the Goose, are sacred symbols, of very frequent recurrence on the sculptured stones of Ceylon, where a planetary worship (strangely similar to that which seems to have been the ancient religion of Britain) has prevailed from time immemorial.

So very little is positively known concerning the Druids that it is rather by inference, and by noting such traces of their teaching as long survived in those Isles, that we gather even a vague, shadowy image of the wise men and their tenets. Only from some slight allusions in the classics, and from the somewhat apocryphal old Celtic chronicles, do we gather something of their mythology, and of the names and attributes of their deities.

One of these was the goddess Brighit, to whose special care were committed all the Hebrides or Ey-Brides, that is The Isles of Brighit or Bridgit. To her, in her Christianized form, are also dedicated six parishes on the mainland of Scotland, while the name of Kilbride, the Cell of Bridget, occurs eighteen times, and the name also appears as Pan-Bride and Llan-Bride (in Morayshire). The latter name tells its own story of the dubious saint, Llan being simply the sacred grove of the Druids, hence Llan-Bride is the grove of Brighit, the Celtic goddess. Her temples were attended by virgins of noble birth, called the daughters of fire, or sometimes merely Breochuidh, the fire-keepers. Like the ancient Persians, they fed this fire only with one kind of peeled wood, and might never breathe upon the sacred flame. The ancient Irish are said to

<sup>1</sup> The camel is carved on the old cross on the Isle of Canna.

have so greatly revered all fire that they would not even put out a candle without uttering a prayer that the Lord would renew to them light from heaven.

When Christianity began to make its difficult way in these isles, it was so impossible to wean these vestal virgins from their post, that it was found simpler to institute a Christian Order of Nuns of St. Bridgit. To one of St. Patrick's converts was assigned this delicate work of adapting things old to new meanings. St. Bridgit accordingly took up her abode in the grove of sacred oaks, where the people were accustomed to worship the goddess, and here she instructed them in the new faith. The vestal virgins were thus transformed into the first Christian community of religious women, and the temple of Bridgit at Kildare, became a great convent.

To these Christian nuns was entrusted the care of the sacred fire, which from time immemorial had been kept burning in honour of the Celtic goddess. When, on the Eve of Good Friday, all other churches and convents extinguished their fire, not relighting it till Easter Eve, the nuns of St. Bridgit always kept theirs steadily burning, a practice which Giraldus Cambrensis says he knows not whether to attribute to a desire to have warmth and food always ready to bestow on all pilgrims and poor people, or whether it was done in obedience to the Levitical command that the fire should be ever burning on the altar, and never go out.

Thus the fire of Bridgit was kept perpetually burning, till the year 1220, when it was extinguished by order of the Archbishop of Dublin to avoid superstition and scandal. So great, however, was the veneration in which it was held by the people, that it was speedily rekindled, and was kept burning steadily until the monastery was suppressed in the time of Henry VIII. The ruins of the Fire House are still, or were till recently, to be seen.

This is all that I can gather concerning the protecting goddess of the Hebrides, whose worship, as also that of Baal the Sun-god, and Neithe the goddess of Wells, was so deeply rooted throughout the British Isles, that even now, traces of the old superstitions survive, and occasionally crop up, to the disgust of the schoolmaster, and the delight of the antiquarian.

Even on Iona itself, which became so emphatically the centre of Christian teaching, many long years elapsed ere all traces of the ancient faith were swept away. Even in the last century, Pennant<sup>1</sup> was told by Bishop Pocock, that on the Eve of St. Michael, the islanders brought all their horses to a small green hillock, whereon stood a circle of stones, surrounding a cairn. Round this hill, *they all made the turn sunwise*, thus unwittingly dedicating their horses to the sun. The Bishop also spoke of a remarkable cromlech, consisting of two stones seven feet in height, with a third laid across them.

Another old legend of the Isle, quoted by several writers of the last century,<sup>2</sup> tells of a circular Druidic temple which has now disappeared (at least, we failed to find it). It consists of twelve great stones, beneath each of which a human victim was buried. That this may have been the case is probable, as Sir Walter Scott has told us that the Picts thus bathed the foundation of their strong buildings in blood, as a propitiation to the spirits of the earth, and that sometimes a human body was thus buried beneath the foundation stone; sometimes only that of an animal. The Welsh too, in building their strong forts, found it necessary thus to appease the earth-spirits, otherwise they would demolish by night, whatever was built during the day.

St. Columba himself has, very unfairly, been credited with another legend, which assuredly belongs to pre-Christian times. It is said that when he and his followers commenced building their chapel (the first Christian Church on the Druid Isle) the power of the evil spirit so prevailed, that the walls were overthrown as fast as they were raised. Then it was revealed to the perplexed saint, that a compromise must be made, and one last sacrifice offered to the powers of evil. Oran having generously devoted his own life to the good cause was interred alive, and remained three days in the grave. On the third day, St. Columba, wishing for one last look

<sup>1</sup> Pennant, in common with our older archæologists, here used the word cromlech, which, however, is now rather applied to circles of standing stones (Celtic, *crom*, a circle; *lech*, a stone)—these trilithons being more appropriately called dolmens (Celtic, *daul*, a table; *maen*, a stone).

<sup>2</sup> Ledwich, Fosbrook, and Higgins.

at his friend, caused the earth and stones to be removed, when, to the amazement of all, Oran sat up, and spake, revealing strange stories of the border land, more especially that the doctrine of Hell, as commonly understood, was a mere fiction of priestcraft, having no real existence. St. Columba having a firm faith in the Eternity of Evil, could by no means suffer such revelations to proceed, so he ordered the earth to be thrown in again, and the voice from the tomb was silenced. You see he lived in the Dark Ages, before the Spirit of Enquiry was fully awakened.

Certain it is that the little church which was rebuilt on the very site of this original chapel, and is the oldest Christian building on the Isle, is dedicated to the Saint, who is said to have here endured this voluntary martyrdom.<sup>1</sup>

At first sight it appears somewhat strange that the long occupation of the Isle by the Druids, should have left so little mark, whereas on the far less noted Isle of Lewis, there still remain such very remarkable Druidic remains as those at Callernish or Loch Bernera, where various monolithic circles, avenues, and a semi-circle, remain to puzzle antiquarians. There are tumuli, and menhirs, one of the latter being twenty feet high, and broad in proportion. Most of the stones, however, only average four feet in height.

The most remarkable feature in the Callernish stones is a circle, sixty-three feet in diameter, formed by twelve stones, with a large central obelisk. It is supposed that this circle represented the sun, and that the twelve stones were the twelve signs of the Zodiac. From this circle four lines of upright stones extend towards the four points of the compass. One of these lines is double, and, moreover, twice the length of the other three; thus producing the form of the Christian cross. Within the circle are two small chambers built of stone.

We have seen that a similar Sun-temple, *i. e.* a circle formed by twelve great stones, remained in Iona till the eighteenth century, and we may well believe that when the island passed into the

<sup>1</sup> In Borneo, and in various groups of South Pacific Isles, it was, till very recently, customary thus to bury victims beside each post of the chief's house, or of a new temple.

hands of teachers of another creed, many of the ancient monuments were quickly turned to account in building and in other ways.

But the most remarkable adaptation of old objects of reverence by the new-comers, was that which appears to me to account beyond doubt, for the existence on this tiny isle of no less than 360 *sculptured stone crosses*, which remained till A.D. 1560, when, by the bigotry of the Protestant Synod of Argyle, they were pronounced to be "monuments of idolatrie," and the fiat went forth, that all should be cast into the sea. Some, however, were happily rescued and taken to old churchyards and market-places in the neighbouring isles, or on the mainland. They were all very similar, being tall monoliths, generally of whinstone (a hard grey stone, which is little affected by the rains and frosts of centuries), and covered with intricate designs. Some were very elaborate round-headed crosses; on others, the round-headed cross was simply carved on the slab.

Now it is exceedingly improbable that the missionary brethren of Iona would have expended their energies on quarrying 360 great blocks of whinstone, in order to carve such a multiplicity of crosses, without any apparent object. But supposing they found the 360 monoliths already erected, and receiving idolatrous worship from the people, nothing could have been more in accordance with the ordinary practice of those days, than to transform these menhirs into crosses, thereby turning these memorials of a heathen worship to Christian uses.

We know that in all parts of the kingdom, these sacred stones were (by order of Pope Gregory, A.D. 601), sprinkled with holy water; and thus sanctified, while the people were still permitted to offer sacrifices of blood, according to their old customs. The edict declares that, as it is impossible to efface old customs from the obdurate minds of the Britons, they may on great festivals continue to build themselves booths and huts with boughs of trees, round about such old Pagan temples as have been sanctified by the sprinkling of holy water, and may there continue to sacrifice and feast on the flesh of cattle.

Thus in speaking of the first dawn of Christianity in Armorica,

Souvestre says, "*On lui baptisa ses idoles, pour qu'elle pût continuer à les adorer. Ce fut ainsi que, ne pouvant déraciner les Menhirs, on les fit Chrétiens, en les surmontant d'une Croix, ainsi que l'on substitua les feux de Saint Jean à ceux qui s'allumaient en l'honneur du soleil.*" Thus the people might continue to offer sacrifice to the gods of their fathers, while bearing the name of Christians!

In Ireland too, Borlase has told us how Crosses were carved on old Druidic monuments, that the people who could not give up their superstitious reverence for these stones, might henceforth pay them a sort of justifiable adoration, as Christian memorials! Doubtless the same history belongs to those tall monoliths, surmounted by a roughly hewn Cross and Circle, which stand by themselves, on the barren heaths of Cornwall, with no trace of human work near, except the ancient Celtic barrows, and grey weather-beaten Druidic stones.

So also, in Scotland, we still find great menhirs, such as those at Meigle and Aberlemnie, where the Cross appears in combination with many Pagan emblems; serpents, large fish, centaur, mirror and comb,<sup>1</sup> and sun-circles;—or that at Deir in Aberdeenshire,

<sup>1</sup> The appearance of The Comb among the sacred emblems is puzzling. But far more so is it, to be obliged to infer that it was one of the objects of Pagan veneration, which the early Christian teachers deemed it expedient to adopt, giving it a new meaning. What that symbolism may have been, we fail to learn. We only know that the comb, formerly used in divination and referred to in many old legends, did in Christian days, acquire some such strange sanctity, that we find it mentioned among the appliances once needed at solemn High Mass, more especially when sung by a Bishop, *in which case a comb was always essential*. Sometimes it was made of ivory; sometimes quite plain; some were adorned with elaborate carving, and even gemmed with precious stones! Both in English and foreign cathedrals they were reckoned as ecclesiastical furniture, and numbered among the costly possessions of the Church.

A list of many such ritual combs is given by Dr. Rock,<sup>1</sup> as having belonged to St. Cuthbert, St. Neot, St. Dunstan, Malachias, and other saints. Various other combs were long preserved at Durham, Canterbury, Glastonbury, and other holy minsters. At Thetford, in the church of St. Sepulchre, you may

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<sup>1</sup> 'The Church of our Fathers.' By Mr. Daniel Rock.

engraven on one side with a rude Cross, but on the other with the circle, crescent, or double-wheel, crossed by a royal sceptre, emblematic of the worship of sun, moon, and planets. Even on the more advanced round-headed Cross we find the same strange mixture of Christian and Pagan emblems, commemorating both faiths, and blending them in the minds of the worshippers in a manner as intricate as is the intertwining of the Runic knots, which so mysteriously interlace the whole.

*To judge of the full significance of the number of the 360 stone crosses of Iona*, it is necessary to compare them with the traces of ancient worship of the same character in other lands, so, without pausing at Stonehenge or Carnac, or other noted spots in Britain or Brittany, we may glance at Northern Africa, where, near Carthage, the circle and crescent are found carved as emblems of sun and moon, just as on the British monuments.

Algeria has been discovered to abound in every known form of rude stone monument. At Roknia three thousand monoliths are grouped together, as if in a vast city of the dead, while near Constantine, and in the district around Sétif, their number has been calculated at ten thousand, including some stones so gigantic, that one is described as fifty-two feet high and twenty-six in diameter at the base; while we hear of a dolmen near Tiaret, the cap-stone of which is sixty-five feet long, by twenty-six feet broad, and upwards of nine feet thick—a rock-mass, which is poised on boulders of thirty to forty feet high.<sup>1</sup>

Tripoli likewise possesses many of these mysterious remains; more especially certain groups of three great stones, so placed as still see the comb of St. Thomas, the martyr of Canterbury, and at Durham that of St. Cuthbert, which was found inside his coffin. Certainly if history speaks truly concerning these holy men, their combs were in no danger of wearing out from overmuch use!

We find, however, that combing the hair of the priest or bishop was one of the offices performed by the inferior clergy not only once, in the vestry—but several times during Divine Service! Surely the custom of hair-dressing at the Christian altar could never have been of indigenous growth, but must rather have sprung from some old pagan rite of unknown import.

<sup>1</sup> 'Rude Stone Monuments.' Fergusson.

to form high, narrow doorways ; so narrow, however, is the space between the upright stones, that a man of average size can hardly squeeze his way through between them ;—truly “ strait and narrow gateways.”

The discovery of these African monuments is the more curious, as suggesting that some forgotten tradition may have inspired old Geoffrey of Monmouth’s assertion, that “ giants in old days brought from Africa the stones which the magic art of Merlin afterwards removed from Kildare, and set up at Stonehenge.” The latter, you will remember, is the only place in Britain where these trilithons exist, though the ordinary dolmen is so common in Cornwall and elsewhere. They have, however, been discovered in various countries, and I have myself seen in one of the Friendly Isles, a very remarkable cyclopean trilithon, concerning which the present race have no tradition. It differs from all others, in that the great stones are hewn, and the cap-stone is let into the two uprights, and this in a country to whose people no metal is known, and whose only buildings are of reeds and timber.<sup>1</sup> In fact the huge stones must have been quarried, and carried from afar.

To pass onward to Hindostan. In Malabar we find dolmens consisting of one huge stone poised on two upright ones, differing only in size from one which Bishop Pocock saw in Iona. There is not one form of cyclopean monument known in the British Isles, or in France, which does not also exist both in Northern and Southern India, either for worship or for sepulture ; oblongs, circles, parallel lines, and many little circles within one large circle.

In Northern India, the place accounted most holy by the sun-worshipping Santhals (the noblest of the primitive races), is at Byjnath in Bengal, near three huge monoliths of gneiss rock. Two of these are vertical. The third lies horizontally across the uprights.

In the Kassia hills near Assam, monuments of this class, sometimes accompanied by gigantic monoliths, are erected in the present day, by one at least of the wild aboriginal tribes, as places

<sup>1</sup> I have given a photograph of this very mysterious object in ‘ A Lady’s Cruise in a French man-of-war.’ Blackwood and Sons.



of sepulture. In this case the monoliths are erected in honour of the dead, whose spirits are invoked in cases of sickness or trouble.

The close analogy between these modern dolmens and monoliths of the East, with ancient remains elsewhere, has led to the somewhat rash conclusion, that all our so-called Druidic temples were, like the tumuli, simply places of sepulture, or commemorative of the dead, or of some great event. Considering the well-known tendency to ancestor-worship which from all ages has pervaded all nations, no inference can be more natural than that the places of sepulture should become places of worship. Moreover, *why a similar analogy in favour of the temple theory, may not be drawn from the circles of Bombay, which are undoubtedly places of worship, it is hard to say.*

The circles to which I allude are to be found at various villages in the Presidency of Bombay, notably near Poonah, where the people continue to erect great stone circles near the Brahmin temples, and there offer sacrifice, every man for himself in defiance of the Hindoo priests, who vainly strive to put down a form of superstition which requires no priestly intervention.

The worshippers at these shrines are descendants of the primitive inhabitants of India, who held the land long before the Aryan conquerors had found their way, either to Britain or to Hindostan. Just as in Scotland the people continued obstinately for many centuries to sacrifice red cocks, and occasionally goats, to demons, in defiance of all the threats and persuasions of Christian teachers, so do these Indian tribes persist in the sacrifice of red cocks and goats to Betal, whose worship has for centuries been condemned by the Brahmins as being devil-worship, but which has still been kept up *sub rosa*, and now that religious toleration has been secured, the people are returning to their first love, and demon-worship is regaining the ascendancy.

The worship of Betal is wide-spread, extending to Guzerat and Cutch. (Fanciful as must be such a connection of ideas, his name is certainly suggestive of that temple of Botallick in Cornwall, where a stone circle still exists, *precisely like these at Poonah, having three principal stones placed facing the east, and one placed quite outside*

*the circle.*) Those at Poonah are painted white, having a great daub of red paint, with a darker spot in the middle, dashed on the upper end of each stone, to represent the blood of the sacrifices. This red spot invariably faces the rising sun.

Passing from Hindostan to Persia, the chosen home of the symbolic worship of Sun and Fire, we there find many circles of great stones, some of which must have been carried from long distances. There are also tall monoliths which the people reverence as having been the sacred stones of ancient Fire Temples.

Crossing the Persian Gulf, we enter Arabia. There Palgrave discovered tall trilithons in connection with circles of great monoliths, and placed, as at Stonehenge, facing the north-east.

I have thus glanced at the rude stone monuments of so many countries in which planetary worship has held sway, in order to show that there is nothing very improbable in tracing a startling resemblance between objects of veneration in the Holy Isle of the Hebrides and those which were held in deepest reverence in Arabia for countless generations before Mahomet arose to overthrow idolatry and divert the worship of the people into a new channel.

The Kaaba at Mecca (which to all good Mahomedans is as sacred as was the Holy of Holies to the Israelite) had, from time immemorial, been accounted by all the people of Arabia, to be the very portal of Heaven. Until the time of Mahomet, it was surrounded by 360 *rude unsculptured monoliths*, which, to the degenerate Arabs, had become objects of actual worship, and in presence of which, they were wont to sacrifice red cocks to the sun (just as the people in these Western Isles have continued to do, almost to the present day, though of course in ignorance of the original meaning of this ancestral custom).

More unflinching than the Christian reformers of Iona, Mahomet would admit of no compromise. Like the Synod of Argyle, he resolved on the destruction of these "monuments of idolatrie," and so his iconoclastic followers did his bidding, and destroyed them utterly.

Nevertheless, he still allowed his converts to retain their custom of *walking seven times in procession, Deisul, i.e. Sunwise, round the*

*Kaaba itself*, in reverence for Abraham and Ishmael, who had rebuilt it after the deluge.

Like all the most sacred shrines of primitive worship, it is a tiny sanctum, measuring only eighteen paces in length, by fourteen in width; and though the faithful have overlaid its doors with silver, and year by year cover it with new silken hangings, its very essence lies in its simplicity.

For the original Kaaba was a tabernacle of radiant clouds, which came down from heaven in answer to the prayer of Adam, who besought the restoration of that shrine where he had been wont to worship in Paradise, and around which he had so often seen the angels move in adoring procession. When, therefore, the cloud temple was restored to him, *he daily walked round it seven times sunwise, in imitation of the angels.*

On the death of Adam, this tabernacle returned to heaven, but one resembling its tent-like form, was built by Seth: being destroyed by the Deluge, it was subsequently rebuilt by Abraham, to whom the Angel Gabriel brought a precious black stone from Paradise, to be inserted in a corner of the outer wall, and adored and reverently kissed by the faithful. This stone is a meteoric stone of oval form, and is described as a fragment of reddish black volcanic basalt sprinkled with coloured crystals. Its dimensions are six by eight inches. It is encircled by a silver band, and is built into the wall at about four feet from the ground, and has attained a high polish from the lips and impressive kisses of ten thousand times ten thousand worshippers.

Strange to say, long before Mahomet's public career had commenced, he was chosen by the people as the most fit person to lift this sacred stone into its place as Chief Corner Stone of the outer wall, when the Kaaba had undergone some necessary repairs. Being thus a standing proof of the honour in which he himself had been held, Mahomet could not find it in his heart to destroy this Heaven-given aerolite (probably even he, would not have dared to do so), and as he could not possibly induce the Arabs to abstain from worshipping it, he permitted them still to do it homage, and so, to the present day, the vast throngs of reverent pilgrims

*kiss it reverently each time they pass it, as they make their seven sunwise circuits round the shrine.*

Strange to say, this black stone also had its counterpart in Iona. It was preserved in the cathedral, till the year 1830, when it mysteriously disappeared, having probably been stolen by some sacrilegious relic-collector. In such reverence was it held, that on it solemn oaths were sworn and agreements ratified. A similar black stone, lying close to the sea, also received worship in the Hebrides till a comparatively recent date. Sir Walter Scott says it was supposed to be oracular, and to answer whatever questions might be asked, by means of the secret influence it exercised on the mind of the inquirer. It lay on the sea-shore, and the people never approached it without certain solemnities.

(Several such unhewn Black Stones are objects of reverence to millions of our Indian fellow-subjects. In the Rajmahal hills, such an one represents their chief deity, and receives sacrifices of goats and of fowls in all times of sickness or other affliction. Moreover, one of the most sacred forms under which Juggernaut is worshipped is that of a shapeless black stone, unhewn, with diamonds let in, as eyes. It must be remembered that Juggernaut, with his many-wheeled cars, rolling in solemn sunwise procession, is held to be symbolic of the sun. In one of the great courts of his principal temple in Southern India is another most sacred black stone, brought by his worshippers from the old temple at Kanarak. This is a monolith 150 feet high, sculptured to the form of a stately pillar. Such pillars, we are told, were common in Southern India even half a century ago, but most of them have been destroyed by the ruthless ravages of Mahomedans and other zealots.)

Apart from such exceptionally sacred stones, as that black stone of Iona, whose fame attracted worshippers from afar, each village in the Highlands is said to have had its rough unhewn stone, called the Gruagach stone,<sup>1</sup> where, till very recent times, the villagers

<sup>1</sup> Gruagach, 'The fair-headed.' Many places once sacred to this goddess still retain her name; e. g. Greenock, *alias* Grian-chnoc, the knoll of the Sun; Bal-green or Baile-greine, the town of the Sun; Grenach or Grian-achaidh, the field of the Sun (a circle of Druidic stones in Perthshire; and Clach-na-greine, or the stone of the Sun, a great Druidic cairn on Isle Bernera; also

poured out libations of milk on every day consecrated to Graine or Grian, the golden-haired Celtic Sun-goddess (just as we now see the Hindoos pour their daily offerings of milk, flowers, and water, on a similar rough unhewn stone, wherein their god is supposed to be present, and which invariably occupies a place of honour in every village). I do not know whether any of these stones still remain in The Isles, but we are told, that not many years ago, there was scarcely a village in the Hebrides where the Gruagach stone was not still held in some sort of reverence.<sup>1</sup> Even in the last century, libations of milk were poured on these stones at dawn every Sunday as a preliminary to Christian worship !

Now look to Japan, where the National Religion (Shinto) is the simplest form of Nature-worship, and where a mirror of highly polished metal, and a globe of polished crystal, both symbols of the Sun-goddess, are the sole objects of veneration to be seen in every Shinto temple—being reproductions of the Heaven-bestowed Mirror and Crystal Globe so devoutly adored by thousands of pilgrims, who, year by year, visit the sacred Shrines of Isé—the Mecca of the Shinto faith. These venerated shrines are the plainest possible little tent-shaped buildings of unpainted wood, even more unpretentious than the Kaaba. They, too, are enclosed by an outer wall, at one corner of which, three feet from the ground, *a large dark stone* holds a conspicuous place. It is perfectly polished by the constant friction of reverent hands. For he who suffers from any manner of pain, needs only to rub this healing stone, and then rub his own body, and his cure is certain.

(I have not been told by any eye-witness whether the *seven sunwise turns round these shrines*, form part of the accustomed ritual, but there is every probability they do so, as I have seen the *Deisul* thus performed round many Japanese shrines of far less note.)

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Ben Grianan in Perthshire ; Bein-na-Grianan in Skye and also in Jura ; and Grianan in the Isle of Arran. All these are lofty mountain summits, which catch the first ray of the rising sun.

<sup>1</sup> The Rev. Kenneth Macaulay, describing this ceremony, says : "There was a Gruagach stone in almost every village in the Western Isles." *Vide* 'History of St. Kilda,' p. 88. Pub. 1764.

It would be strange indeed if the coincidence in the number of these 360 monoliths at Iona, and at Mecca, had been the result of mere accident, when we remember that these were both the shrines of races who worshipped the heavenly bodies, and who divided the zodiac into 360 degrees ;—that the Arabs, as well as the ancient Hindoos, and their Western Druidic brethren, reckoned a lunar year of 360 days, believing the sun's revolution to be completed in the same period.

Among the stones of Iona, destroyed by order of the ruthless Synod, were *three noble globes* of white marble, which lay in three hollows worn on a large stone slab. Every person visiting the island was expected *to turn each of these thrice round, following the course of the sun*, according to the custom of Deisul, of which we find so many traces in these Isles. The action of course represented the motion and form of the earth or the apparent motion of the sun.

The stone on which they rested was called Clach-bratha, because it was supposed that when they had, by constant friction, worn a hole right through the stone, then the *brath* or burning of the world would come. The stone still lies beside the door of St. Oran's Chapel, though, unfortunately, it has been broken across the middle. In size and shape it resembles a flat tombstone, and might be passed by as such, were it not for a row of cup-like hollows worn at one end of it.

These were pointed out to me by an old man, as having been, in his youth, occupied by stone balls, about the size of a child's head—balls which doubtless had replaced the original marbles destroyed by that iconoclastic Synod. He told me, that in his younger days, he, like all his neighbours, had never passed that place without stopping to turn each of these balls thrice sunwise for luck. How and when these also disappeared, he could not tell. Probably, like their predecessors, they had fallen victims to some ruthless and senseless hater of ancient superstition, himself too ignorant to perceive the bearing of such trivial matters on divers vexed questions of the day—faint whispers from the speechless past, they make one long the more to unravel its mysteries.

For instance, how curious is the coincidence between this custom

of the old Druids of Iona and that of the modern so-called Fire Worshippers. Rabbi Benjamin in his account of the Ghebers at Onlam, says : " Early in the morning, they go in crowds, to pay their devotions to the sun, to whom upon all the altars are *consecrated spheres*, resembling the circles of the sun, and when he rises, the orbs seem to be inflamed, and *turn round* with a great noise, while the worshippers, having every man a censer in his hand, offer incense to the Sun." The crystal globe seems also to have been revered as a sacred symbol by the Babylonians ; at least we hear of such a one being suspended on high in the camp of the great king, that it might catch and reflect the first rays of the rising sun.

The three mystic globes of Iona were by no means the only sacred stones of the Druids, who indeed possessed many such, mostly crystals reputed to possess magic powers, and many wonders were said to have been wrought by these, some of which indeed retained their miraculous powers till recent days ; and water into which such an one has been dipped has ever been accounted a certain cure for all manner of diseases, of men, of cattle, and of horses.

One such magic crystal, the size of a hen's egg, is still preserved by the Stewarts of Ardvoirlich in Perthshire, and it is believed that water into which it has been dipped, cures cattle of distemper. Even now, graziers sometimes come from long distances—perhaps more than forty miles—to obtain this precious medicine, and are greatly disgusted at finding that the far-famed Clach Dearg has been deposited at the bank, with other family treasures, and can by no means be borrowed.

A stone of the same sort is the hereditary property of the Robertsons of Struan. It is called the Clach-na-Bratach or Stone of the Standard, and since the days of Bannockburn the clan has never gone to battle without carrying this stone, whose varying colour boded good or evil. On the Eve of Sheriff-muir a large flaw was detected in it, and all present knew that evil would befall them on the morrow. No medical stores are needed by those within hail of this precious charm, inasmuch as the water in which it has been

thrice dipped (having first been carried round it thrice sunwise), will assuredly cure all manner of diseases of men, of cattle, and of horses. The Campbells of Glen-Lyon have a similar magical curing-stone.

A list of many such magical stones was compiled two hundred years ago, by a Welshman, curious in these matters, in which he mentions upwards of fifty varieties in common use among his countrymen and the Scottish Highlanders; some round, some oval, some hollow rings, some of crystal, some of glass, but all alike were used medicinally, especially on May Day at the feast of Beltane (Beilteine, "the fire of Baal"), when they were dipped in water, with which the cattle were sprinkled to save them from the power of witches and elves.<sup>1</sup>

One of these precious crystal balls remains to this day in the family of Willox, the hereditary cattle-curers at Nairn, and is reported to have worked wondrous cures in the present generation. The crystal is dipped in a bucket of water, which thereupon becomes a magic mirror, reflecting the face of the bad neighbour who has bewitched the cattle, and thus breaking his spell.

I have been told that somewhere in Northumberland, certain sacred Irish pebbles are still revered, and are carefully kept in a basket, and never allowed to touch English ground, lest they should lose the power which they have retained from time immemorial, of healing any sore limb to which they are applied.

But in Ross-shire, a whole lake has been endowed with healing properties, from the lucky accident that a woman who possessed certain curative pebbles, flung them into Lake Monar, rather than allow herself to be robbed of them by an envious man. So to this

<sup>1</sup> A silver-mounted black flint, bearing date 1174, was long treasured in the family of the Bairds of Auchmeddan, but is now the property of the Frasers of Findrack. The Lockharts of Lee have proved more staunch guardians of the celebrated Lee penny, a small heart-shaped red pebble set in a coin of Edward IV., and for the purchase of which the townsfolk of Newcastle offered £6000 during the terrible plague in the time of Charles I. They were allowed to borrow "the penny" for the healing of their diseases, but the Laird of Lee would by no means consent to part with it.



day, in the months of May and August, many persons make pilgrimage thither from all parts of Ross, Sutherland, Caithness, Inverness, and even from the Orkneys. They must stand by the loch at midnight,—plunge in thrice,—make three turns sunwise,—drink a little,—throw a coin into the loch, and take care to be out of sight of the loch before daybreak!

If all tales be true, the Celtic Fathers were by no means averse to enlisting such magic in the advancement of the Christian cause. It was in consequence of a miracle thus wrought, that St. Columba was enabled to obtain possession of The Isle. For although his kinsman Conal, the Christian King of the Northern Scots, is said to have bestowed it upon him—a gift confirmed by Brude, King of the Picts, when he too was converted—it is not to be supposed that so powerful a body as were the Druids, would have suffered themselves to be driven out without a struggle, had not some supernatural influence been brought to bear upon them.

Accordingly we learn that the Arch-Druid Broichan, having refused to release a certain captive Irish-woman at the request of St. Columba, the latter, proceeding to the river Ness, took thence a white pebble, and, showing it to his companions, told them that the Angel of God had stricken the Arch-Druid with a sudden stroke, so that he lay nigh unto death, but that should he repent, he had only to drink a cup of water in which that pebble had been dipped, and he would assuredly recover. While he yet spake, two horsemen galloped up, bearing tidings from the king, that all had befallen even as Columba had predicted. The holy man straightway sent messengers to the palace; they received the captive from the hand of the repentant Broichan, while he himself, having drunk of that mystic cup (whereon the pebble floated as though it had been a nut), was immediately made whole. That little pebble was afterwards preserved among the treasures of King Brude, and retaining its miraculous power of floating on water (in common with other magical stones), it wrought divers wondrous cures.

Thus it was, that when the king proposed to bestow on St. Columba the Innis-nan-Druidanach, the Holy Isle of the Druids,

he was suffered to hold it in peace and without great opposition, and by degrees the name of the Isle was changed to I-Colm-kill, "The Isle of the Cell of Calum or Malcolm."

Whether fairly or otherwise, St. Columba is credited with having taken considerable advantage of the popular superstitions of his day. For instance, when first he sought admission to the presence of the heathen King Brude, the latter refused to give him audience, and bade his followers bar the door of his rude palace. Then St. Columba deliberately walked round the king's house *widder shins*, i. e. in the direction contrary to the course of the sun (an action which was equivalent to a most solemn curse). Thereupon the door fell open of its own accord, and the saint entered the royal presence. St. Adamnan, however, affirms that the cross signed on the palace gate was the sole talisman used on that occasion, and that immediately the gates burst open. He says too, that as St. Columba approached the Pictish fort, chanting the 45th Psalm, his voice was so miraculously strengthened, as to be heard like a thunder-peal above the clamour, whereby the Pictish magicians strove to silence his evening prayer.

When St. Columba took up his abode on The Isle, his first care was to build a chapel and "an hospice" beside the 370 grey monoliths. He accordingly sent forth his monks to gather "bundles of twigs" for this purpose; the architecture of those days (A.D. 563), being exceedingly primitive, wattle and daub<sup>1</sup> formed the materials of these early thatched churches. Where the brethren found the twigs I am at a loss to imagine, as there certainly are none on Iona now; (at least I failed to find any vegetation of taller growth than beautiful hart's-tongue ferns in some ravines on the further shore). It may, however, have been otherwise thirteen hundred years ago, or else the brethren must certainly have gone across to Mull, in search of sticks. But I should think that the stones and

<sup>1</sup> With the exception of fortified castles, all superior dwelling-houses on the Isles seem to have been built in this style until a very recent period. Dr. Norman Macleod speaks of Glendessary and several other houses, as *constructed of wickerwork*, the outside being protected with straw, the interior lined with wood.

rubble and turf which lay ready to their hand, were turned to very good account by these rough and ready builders.

Looking at this little lonely isle as we see it to-day, where there remain only the grey ruins of the comparatively recent cathedral, and all is silent and desolate, it is strange indeed to think of all the countless memories which cluster round that hallowed ground, even dating only from the Christian era, when the fame of St. Columba attracted thither men of all races of Northern Europe—some seeking the learning of the Fathers; wise men coming from afar, to consult those deemed wiser still, on affairs of Church and State; chieftains and Vikings coming to seek blessings; penitents to confess their crimes (murder and sacrilege and cruel forays), that they might do penance meet, and open a fresh account with heaven. Here kings came, seeking consecration, and their fleets of strange quaint galleys, with curious sails and multitudinous oars, were anchored in these quiet harbours; such vessels as that in which King Haco came from Norway—a great ship built wholly of oak, having twenty-seven banks of oars, and adorned with curiously-wrought gilded dragons.

Oftener than all came sad funeral processions, galleys freighted with the dead, coming to claim a last resting-place in this hallowed isle of graves. Chiefs and kings, ecclesiastics and warriors, were thus brought from afar across the stormy seas, that their dust might not be disturbed by the terrible flood, announced in an ancient prophecy, which foretold, that seven years before the end of the world, Ireland and The Isles should all be overwhelmed, and Iona alone should rise above the waters.

Strange, is it not? to think of all the interests that gather round one little rocky isle, lying so far away in the midst of this Hebridean sea, and to think how from its wave-beaten shores the great pure light arose, which, radiating thence on every side, never waned till the whole land was Christianized, and churches and chapels were established in every corner. Then the noble Mother Church, having done her great work, seems to have died an unnatural death, and been suffered to fall into such a state of ruin and decay as is hard to account for, unless the solution lie in that old proverb which tells how, “when the croziers became golden, the bishops

became wooden," and so perhaps the old fire and vigour died out, and the Churchmen preferred more secure dwellings on the mainland, to the dangers and perils that surrounded them on Columba's Isle.

On every side Columba's resistless energies spread themselves forth, as he sailed from isle to isle, from shore to shore—the busiest Bishop that ever ruled and comforted a flock of his own gathering. Though we associate his name so wholly with Iona, we know that the greater part of his time was spent in constant visitation of the neighbouring isles and mainland, where he founded upwards of fifty churches, while in latter life he so far retracted his vow of eternal separation from the Emerald Isle as to return thither several times to strengthen the hands of his brethren. He had founded Derry in A.D. 546, when he was only twenty-five years of age, and Durrow, the greatest of his Irish monasteries, a few years later. First and last it is said that at least thirty abbeys and churches in Ireland owe their origin and celebrity to him. It must be remembered that he was forty-two years of age ere he left his native land, so that Ireland received a full share of his seventy-six years of life. His own county of Donegal is especially rich in memorials of St. Columba.

Besides the work he did in person, he sent forth his brethren in all directions to teach and to preach, so that ere long there was scarcely an island or a quiet bay along the seaboard where one or other of the Celtic Fathers had not built his little lonely chapel, to shed its ray of light on the Pagan people.

A little green hillock overlooking the old monastery, still bears the name of Tor Ab, the Abbot's Hill; because here, it was said, he was wont to sit and meditate while scanning the blue waters, to catch the first glimpse of galleys that might be approaching his Isle, bearing saints or sinners—perplexed brethren, or warriors red-handed from foray or murder—coming to seek his counsel in their difficulties, or absolution from their crimes. Once the little hill was crowned with one of those tall Ionic crosses, the site of which, however, is now marked only by a fragment of the base.

Thence he could look across the narrow straits which separate

Iona from the great hills of Mull, and with keen eye discern the approach of pilgrims who chose to shorten their long sea-voyage by traversing Mull's savage mountain glens, and who, on reaching the opposite shore, had only to cry aloud to attract the attention of the brethren of the monastery, who were ever ready to ferry all comers across the Straits, and give them hearty welcome to a shelter and a share of such rude fare as they themselves possessed.

Remote, indeed, must have seemed that island home, when frail sailing-boats were the sole means of access to the great world ; and a difficult and dangerous journey this was too, for the pilgrims who crowded thither ; though now made so simple and comfortable for the bands of tourists who, availing themselves of swift steamboats, look upon a day's run to Iona and back again, as an easy pleasure trip.

Very different too, from the cruciform Cathedral of massive red granite (the ruins of which we now see on the Isle) was the humble chapel, surrounded by a group of rude monastic cells, which were the only " visible Church " and monastery of those days ; but little did the pilgrims reckon of outward things, while the very presence of St. Columba diffused such life and energy to all around him.

One of his distinguishing features was that marvellously clear and musical voice, so powerful that, according to his biographers, he could be distinctly heard a mile off, so, from his lowly chapel, wherever he might be, on island or on mainland, Christian hymns were wont to rise in tones so sweet and clear, that the heathen could not choose but listen, and be attracted.

His disciples were not allowed to eat the bread of idleness. He taught them to be diligent in agricultural work, and the natural fertility of Iona was of course, attributed to a miraculous blessing.<sup>1</sup>

Knowing the necessity for good roads across the sometimes swampy moorland, St. Columba had a substantial causeway laid right across the Isle, from the monastery to the western shore, where

<sup>1</sup> Happily it retains this characteristic, and moreover its harvest is generally remarkably early, being sometimes garnered in August, a rare advantage in this region of much rain. About one-fourth of its two thousand acres are under tillage.

lies the only arable land. The length of the Isle from shore to shore measures about three miles—its average width being one mile. Along that road he was carried shortly before his death, in a car drawn by oxen, that he might once more behold his brethren working in their fields, and looking down on that peaceful scene, the grand old saint, whose busy, useful life on earth was so nearly ended, announced to his faithful co-workers that the hour of his departure was now at hand, and standing upon the waggon, he lifted his hands heavenward and blessed them, and likewise blessed the happy isle which he was so soon to leave.

A week later, on the last day of his life, he once more ascended his favourite green hillock, and looking down on his loved monastery, he blessed the land, the granaries, and the people; then he pronounced his farewell benediction on the Isle, in words that proved prophetic, for he foretold how “this little spot, so small and low, should, nevertheless, be greatly honoured, not only by Scots, kings, and peoples, but by foreign chiefs and barbarous nations, and saints of other Churches.”

Truly has his prophecy been fulfilled.

Returning to his cells after vespers, he continued his work of transcribing the Psalter, and ending at the 34th Psalm, told his brethren that Baithen<sup>1</sup> must finish it. When the midnight bell had rung to herald the dawn of the Sunday festival, and call the brethren to matins, he rose quickly, and hurrying forth with feeble steps, hastened towards the church, not waiting to trim his lamp, but finding light enough in the summer night to guide him along the oft-trodden path.

The first to follow him was the faithful Diarmid, who on approaching the church beheld a radiant light beaming forth from the windows, and entering quickly beheld a glorious vision of angels, who vanished as he drew near. He called his master aloud,

<sup>1</sup> St. Baithen, *alias* Comin, died in 601. Comin Ailbe (that is, the Fair,) died in 668, and was seventh Bishop of Iona. His church was at the head of Loch Ness, and is still called by the Highlanders Kill Chuimein, generally known as Fort Augustus. It is consolatory to the Clan Cummin (*alias* Comyn), to have produced at least two saints, at so early a date!

but no voice answered. Other brethren now hurried in, bearing lanterns, and beheld their loved abbot lying prone before the altar, unable to speak, but his face radiant with joy. He strove once more to raise his hand to bless his weeping children, and as the hand fell back powerless, the master spirit passed away.<sup>1</sup>

Thus in the seventy-sixth year of his age died this kingly priest. A man of fiery energy, bold, impetuous, passionate (anything but dove-like), earnest alike in teaching, counselling, reproving; unsparing of himself, and continually braving peril by sea and by land, "in journeyings often, in perils of robbers (or pirates), in perils by the heathen, in perils in the wilderness and in the sea, in weariness and painfulness, in watchings and fastings, in hunger, and thirst, and cold." St. Paul himself can scarcely have borne a harder life than did our Celtic apostle.

In personal appearance he was tall and commanding, with regular features, and long hair falling on either shoulder, but only from the temple, as the form of tonsure which was deemed essential by these early Celtic priests both of Ireland and Scotland involved shaving the entire front of the head, producing a most venerable appearance. This custom they believed to be derived from apostolic times. When, therefore, in later days the Roman Church introduced the form of merely shaving a circular ring on the crown and on the back of the head, which was called the tonsure of St. Peter, this weighty distinction was treated as a matter of such vital importance as very nearly to result in a schism.

Another point of difference, hotly contested, was the question on which day Easter should be observed—a burning question which had long divided the Eastern and Western Churches, and which, in Britain, was not finally decided till A.D. 716.

In so saintly a life as that of St. Columba, miracles seem to come in quite naturally. Such was the halo of glorious light which shone around him, and illumined the little cell where he was wont to pray; such too the legend which tells how angels came and talked to him on the hill, which in memory of those celestial visitors is still called by the people *Croc-an-Aingel*—"the Angel's Hill."

<sup>1</sup> 9th June, A.D. 597. Observed as St. Columba's Day.

Supernatural light of a visible kind had been vouchsafed to him in his youth, when as a student (always of a devout turn, and so greatly addicted to sacred studies that his companions bestowed on him the name of Colm-Kille, *i. e.*, Malcolm of the Church) he had been struck with special admiration of a Book of Psalms belonging to St. Finian. The latter, saint though he was, must have been a noted churl, for Columba dared not ask leave to copy the manuscript, but determined to do so in secret (on the excellent principle, of doing what you wish first, and asking leave afterwards! a system which if it has occasional drawbacks, has also undoubted advantages). For this purpose the young student remained in the church every night after vespers. He had no candle, but a miraculous light shone from his hand and illuminated the page while he wrote. After a while, this mysterious light attracted attention and led to his discovery. St. Finian, however, feigned ignorance till the work was completed, and then he claimed it for his own—a claim which the vexed scribe resisted. The matter was referred to King Diarmid, who decided that “To every cow belongs her own calf,” hence, to every book its copy, a judgment the injustice of which Columba resented so hotly, that this, coupled at a later period with the treacherous murder of his friend, the young Prince of Connaught, led to his taking so violent a part in what we may call the Civil Wars, that he was eventually recommended to carry his fiery energies across the sea, which he accordingly did, greatly to the benefit of Scotland.

This Psalm Book was afterwards known as the Catach or Book of Battles, by reason of the great battles and bloodshed to which it gave rise. Soon it came to be used as a charm, which secured victory to any army which possessed it, provided it was *carried thrice sunwise* round the host on the morning of battle. This most precious relic is still preserved in the Royal Irish Academy in Dublin; it is a Psalter encased in a highly ornamental silver shrine.

It is somewhat remarkable that St. Cuthbert, patron saint of Northumbria's Holy Isle, should likewise be so intimately connected with battles. A banner, made from a cloth which he had used in



celebrating Mass, possessed [such magic virtue, that its presence ensured victory to whosoever carried it. The defeat of the Scottish army at Flodden was attributed to its influence. Righteous therefore was the retribution when this far-famed banner was taken down from its place of honour beside St. Cuthbert's shrine in Durham Cathedral, and ignominiously burnt, by the sister of Calvin, whose husband had been appointed the first Protestant Dean of the Cathedral.

Curiously enough, the spot pointed out as having been St. Columba's place of burial, is not within the precincts of St. Oran's Chapel, the site always occupied by the church of the Culdees, but on the further side of the Cathedral, which, six hundred years later, was built by the Church of Rome. His saintly remains, however, did not long find rest upon Iona, for when, again and again, his followers were driven forth from their homes by ruthless invaders, they carried his bones with them, both as precious relics, and to save them from molestation. Kells in Ireland, and the Cathedral of Dunkeld in Scotland, henceforth divided the honour of possessing them, and thus it was that, for several centuries, Iona came to be included in the diocese of Dunkeld.

Here I cannot but allude to that fascinating old legend, confirmed by divers chronicles, which tells how Jacob's Pillow,—the Stone of Luz,—chanced to become the chosen pillow of St. Columba, and to this day commands the reverent homage of every loyal subject, as the mystic Coronation Stone whereon from time immemorial all Scottish Sovereigns, including Her Most Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria, have of necessity been seated when assuming the Royal Crown.

This stone is described in the ancient chronicles of the Picts and Scots as "Pharaoh's stone from Egypt;" and they further state that its earliest resting-place in Scotland was at Beregonium—a famous settlement of the Dalriad Scots, on Loch Etive, whence it was next removed to the strong tower of Dunstaffnage.

The mention of these names suggests so strong a local interest that I must give you a general summary of the legend, which traces back the history of this venerated stone through all its

wanderings, starting from the plains of Luz, where, on one memorable night some four thousand years ago, it served as the pillow whereon Jacob rested his weary head while beholding the vision of angels.

Thence it was carried into Egypt by the Israelites, as a precious memorial, and there it was left by them, on the night of their hurried departure from the land of their captivity, but continued to be held in reverence by the Egyptians. Now there was a certain Prince of Athens named Gayelglas, who arrived in Egypt just at the time of the Exodus, to help Pharaoh against the Ethiopians. As the reward of victory, he claimed the hand of Scots, the beautiful daughter of Pharaoh.

The young couple seem to have had a wholesome terror of the plagues wherewith Egypt had been scourged, and determined to seek a new home ; so, taking with them a handful of the Egyptian army which had escaped from the destruction of the Red Sea, and a company of Greek “heroes of dark blue weapons,” they made their way to Spain, carrying with them the Israelite stone of good omen.<sup>1</sup> They founded a kingdom at Brigantium, where, according to one account, they lived and died, and their descendants for many generations were crowned on the mystic stone.

At length, about the year B.C. 580, Simon Breck, a younger son of one of these kings of Spain, determined to found a new kingdom for himself, and having carried off the precious regal stone, he made his way to the shores of Ireland, “ane rude island opposite to Spaine, in the north, inhabited by ane rude people, having neither laws nor manners.” He called this people Scoti, after the name of his Egyptian ancestress, and the land Hibernia, after his favourite general Hiber. Another version of the story tells how Scots her-

<sup>1</sup> In the ‘Chronicle of the Scots,’ preserved in the British Museum, and bearing date A.D. 1412, we read that—

“Ye nation of Scotts began in y<sup>e</sup> time of Moses, as is contained in y<sup>e</sup> Bibill ; . . . Scots and Gayelglas were maryite together in y<sup>e</sup> time yat y<sup>e</sup> bairnes of Israel passyt in y<sup>e</sup> Red Sea, and y<sup>e</sup> death of Pharaoh yat governed y<sup>e</sup> land of Egypt. And for they saw y<sup>e</sup> cruel plagues that came on Egypt, they decreed to pass with their folk that they brought of Greece, and many of Egypt, for to seek void lands and to inhabit them ; they went with gret riches and many ships, and so they came to Spain.”

self came in person to the Emerald Isle, and so captivated the sons of Erin by her beauty and her grace, that in her honour they henceforth adopted the name of Scoti, and called their land Ibernica, after her son Iber.

Thus the Stone of Luz was brought to figure in the story of the Irish Kings. Time wore on, and we next hear of it, when a later descendant of Scota, Fergus I., son of Ferchard, sailed across the stormy seas, and established a new colony of Scots in Argyleshire, where he built the town called Beregonium. Of course, he did not fail to bring with him the mysterious stone, which his ancestors had held in such honour from generation to generation.

Here, however, it found but a temporary resting-place, for already the fame of Iona, the Druids' Holy Isle, made Fergus decide on going thither for his coronation. Once more, therefore, this migratory stone was embarked, that its presence might sanction the ceremony. *Thus it reached Iona about A.D. 530.*

We next hear of it in A.D. 597, when Columba—like Jacob of old—*adopted it as his stony pillow*, and thereon rested his sacred head when he slept the sleep of death. Then, for the second time, this wondrous stone became associated with angelic visions; for as the dark shades of death were closing round him, St. Columba beheld bright angels coming down from heaven, and their presence filled the little church with unearthly light—a light whose splendour illuminated the whole sky, while the angelic guard wafted the saintly soul from the Holy Isle to the place prepared for it in Heaven.

Soon after St. Columba's death, the venerated treasure was removed to Evonium (now called Dunstaffnage) by Evenus, one of the shadowy Dalriadic kings, who built his tower on the same site as the mighty ruined fortress of later days now stands. A hollow niche in one of the vaults is pointed out as the resting-place of this well-guarded treasure.

At Dunstaffnage the wandering stone seems to have remained undisturbed till the year A.D. 834, when its travels recommenced, and it was removed to Scone by Kenneth II. to commemorate his having there obtained his chief victory over the Picts. At Scone, as we all know, it was suffered to remain till 1296, when Edward I.

transported it to London, and deposited it in its present honourable position in the grand old Abbey of Westminster, where to this day it still retains its old king-making prerogative, and lies in a hollow space beneath the seat of King Edward's wooden coronation chair, whence it continues to impart its mystic virtue to every British sovereign.

Even Cromwell, grim destroyer of all monuments of superstition, did not disdain to borrow a legalizing virtue from the old stone, for we are told that "when he was installed as Lord Protector in Westminster Hall, he was placed in the chair of Scotland, brought out of Westminster Abbey for that singular and special occasion."

To the outward eye it appears only to be a rough block of red sandstone rudely squared, and measuring 26 inches in length,  $16\frac{3}{4}$  inches in breadth, and  $10\frac{1}{2}$  inches in depth. Its cracked and battered appearance tells of many a chance blow received in the course of its wanderings, while the rusty iron rings attached on either side to facilitate its transport, are also suggestive of its many migrations from kingdom to kingdom.

A strangely-suggestive link, in truth, is this time-honoured symbol of royalty, connecting ages far apart by one curious bond, namely, the utterly unaccountable reverence for a poor battered old stone, the history and origin of which are alike matter of vaguest tradition, and which, nevertheless, retains its position, deeply-rooted in the very heart of our monarchic constitution, connecting the stateliest ceremony of modern England with the earliest trace of superstitious homage paid to the rude warrior chiefs of the Dalriad Scots, or our still more shadowy ancestral princes of Ireland; a stone, in short, which has been the silent witness, as well as the authority for, the coronation of each successive generation in these isles for upwards of 2400 years.

The Dean of Westminster, speaking of its present position in his grand old abbey, compares it to "Araunah's rocky threshing-floor in the midst of the Temple of Solomon, carrying back our thoughts to races and customs now almost extinct; an element of poetic, patriarchal, heathen times; a link which unites the throne of England with the traditions of Tara and Iona, and connects the

CORONATION CHAIR IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY, SHOWING THE  
KING-MAKING STONE.



charm of our complex civilization with the forces of Mother Earth, the stocks and stones of savage Nature."

Of the actual buildings of St. Columba, all trace has, of course, long since passed away, as we may well believe, from their frail nature. Consequently, by far the oldest Christian building on the isle is that which bears the name of St. Oran's Chapel, which was built in the eleventh century (that is, five hundred years after St. Columba's death), by the saintly Queen Margaret, wife of Malcolm Caenmore, on the very site of the original chapel, built by the great Abbot himself, and called by the name of his friend and co-worker.

Around it lies the sacred enclosure known as the Reilig Orain—the far-famed place of burial to which, from time immemorial, kings, saints, and warriors have been brought from so many lands, to rest on this favoured isle. The place is called in Gaelic, "the ridge of kings," and formerly three separate covered chapels, inscribed in Latin as "Tumulus Regum Scotiæ," "Tumulus Regum Hyberniciæ," and "Tumulus Regum Norwegiciæ," were set apart to receive the royal dead of those nations. For so it was, that on this bleak isle,

" Beneath the showery west,  
The mighty kings of three fair realms were laid."

Here forty-eight crowned kings of Scotland sleep their last sleep ; a long list of royal names, ending with those of the murdered Duncan and Macbeth, both of whom were, as Shakespeare says of Duncan :—

" Carried to Colm's-kill,  
The sacred store-house of his predecessors,  
And guardian of their bones."

Macbeth was the last Scottish king who was buried here. After his death, Dunfermline was appointed to be the place of kingly sepulture, and there Malcolm Caenmore was buried.

Four kings of Ireland were also buried in the Reilig Orain, and even from "Noroway over the foam" were royal dead carried hither. Eight Danish and Norwegian sea-kings were brought in solemn state, that they might sleep the more peacefully near

Columba's sainted dust. Of great lords, temporal and ecclesiastical, the multitude is without number, and includes at least one Bishop of Canterbury, Turnbull by name. In short the island has been described as "the Jerusalem of the various Celtic tribes, who sought safety in the eternal world by laying their bones in Iona."

That this feeling of veneration for the Isle existed long before the arrival of St. Columba is evident; were it only from the fact of King Fergus having sailed to Iona for his coronation, though the mainland would surely have been more convenient for that ceremony, and we afterwards hear of his body being carried thither for burial, many years before the fiery priest had been exiled from his loved home in the Emerald Isle.<sup>1</sup>

This unique burial-ground has been so ruthlessly despoiled of its monuments and crosses, that imagination is sorely taxed to picture it as it was in its palmy days, or even as described by Munro, Dean of the Isles, in A.D. 1594, that is to say, upwards of thirty years after the destruction of the 360 great grey Crosses, so that even then, the scene had lost its most striking characteristic. He says: "Within this isle of Kilm kill (I-Colm-kill) there is a kirkzaird, callit in Eriche, *Reilig Onrain*, quhilk is a very fair kirkzaird, and weill biggit about with staine and lyme. Into this sanctuary there are three tombes of staine, formit like little chapels, with ane braide grey marble, or quhin staine, in the gavil of ilk of the tombes.

"In the staine of the ane tombe there is written in Latin letters, *Tumulus Regum Scotiæ*,—that is, the tombe ore grave of the Scottis Kings. Within this tombe, according to our Scottes and Erische cronikles, ther laye *fortey-eight crowned Scotts Kings*, through the quihilk this ile hes been richly dotat be the Scotts Kinges, as we have said.

"The tombe on the South side aforesaid, has this inscription, *Tumulus Regum Hiberniæ*, that is, the tombe of the Irland Kingis; for we have in our auld Erische cronikells, that ther were *four Irland Kingis* erdit in the same tombe.

"Upon the north syde of our Scottes tombe, the inscription bears, *Tumulus Regum Norwegiæ*,—that is, the tombe of the Kings of

<sup>1</sup> Fergus, A.D. 536. St. Columba landed, 563. Died, 597.



Noroway. And als' we find in our Erische cronikells, that Cælus, King of Noroway, commandit his nobils to take his bodey and burey it in Colm Kill, if it chancit him to die in the iles; bot he was so discomfitit, that; ther remained not so maney of his army as wald burey him ther, therefor he was eirdet in Kyles, after he stroke ane field against the Scotts, and was vanquisht be them.

“ Within this sanctuary also lye the maist pairt of the Lords of the Iles, with their lynage, twa clan Leans, with their lynage, Mac Kynnon and Mac Quarrie, with their lynage, with sundrie uthers inhabitants of the haill isles, because this Sanctuary was wont to be the sepulture of the best men of all the iles, and als' of our Kinges, as we have said, because it was the maist honourable and ancient place that was in Scotland.”

Now all trace of the chapels has vanished, and the kingly dust has mixed itself with common clay, without even the distinction of such beautifully carved stones as mark the graves of abbots and warriors—stones inscribed with figures of the chase or emblems of life on land and sea—knights in full armour with long two-handed swords, or ecclesiastics in their robes and mitres. One stone is shown (of red unpolished granite, marked only with a rudely cut cross), beneath which sleeps a nameless King of France, of whom tradition avers that he was compelled to abdicate the crown, and then retreated to this isle to find a last resting-place among Macleods and Macleans, Mackinnons, Macquarries, and Macdonalds.

Of the 360 Crosses, only two now remain quite intact, namely, one dedicated to St. Martin, which stands near the entrance of the Cathedral enclosure. It is a round-headed cross of grey stone, covered with Runic knotting, and some saintly figures. It stands fourteen feet high, and has been raised on a pedestal of red granite three feet in height.

The other is a beautifully carved old cross, known as “Maclean's.” It stands beside the ruined causeway which bears the name of Martyr Street, and leads from the sea to the Cathedral—a paved way along which many a sad procession has passed, bearing the dead to their last resting-place.

When the dead were carried ashore in the Martyrs' Bay, they

were laid on the green hillock of Eala, the Mound of the Burden, round which the funeral company *thrice marched sunwise in solemn procession*, as they had been wont to do from time immemorial, in common with many races, both ancient and modern, in all parts of the world. I do not suppose this custom is even now wholly extinct, for even on the more advanced mainland, the path to a churchyard is often led circuitously, so as to ensure the corpse being carried in the orthodox sunwise course, and the people strongly oppose any short cut, which would interfere with this beneficial circuit.

At the green mound, the dead were sometimes waked for three days and nights, with singing of psalms and wild wailing coronachs, ere they were borne, slowly and sadly, with bitter lamentation, along the "Street of the Dead" and through "the narrow way" to the place prepared for them in Reilig Orain, there to be laid mid kindred dust. But only the lords of the creation were allowed a place of rest on the Holy Isle, for I grieve to say that Columba was a very unchivalrous saint, who guarded the strict and severe sanctity of his isle so jealously that he would not suffer womankind to set foot thereon; nay, forbade even cattle on their account, because, he said, "Where there is a cow there must be a woman, and where there is a woman there must be mischief!" So such tradesmen and labourers as were indispensable to the monastic community, and so had to live on the isle, and yet insisted on having wives, were obliged to keep them on a neighbouring islet, called the Woman's Isle.

Even in death Columba would not suffer feminine dust to rest on this holy ground; nor could even the Lords of the Isles obtain a little space where they might lay their wives and their little ones. Consequently while they themselves were buried in Iona with all due ceremony, these lesser creatures were always taken to the Isle of Finlagan.

After a while, however, the women carried the day. They approached the sacred ground with caution. First a little company of religious women established themselves on an islet in the neighbourhood, called "The Isle of Nuns." Thence, after awhile, muster-

ing courage, they passed on to Iona itself, where the Canoness of St. Augustine established a nunnery, or rather a priory of Austin nuns, in which, doubtless, the fair daughters of the land lived lives to the full as holy as the holy brethren. Their dress was a white robe, over which they wore a rochet of fine linen.

Within their chapel is the tomb of Anna, the last Prioress, dated A.D. 1511, and bearing an inscription in Saxon character.

The ruins of this nunnery are our first object of attraction on landing. Its very plain rounded arches indicate its date as being of about the 12th century, which is also the date of the oldest part of the present Cathedral, or Abbey Church of St. Mary, which, however, was not finished till later. It is a cruciform building, having a square tower about seventy feet high, rising from the point where the transept intersects the nave. From north to south, the transepts measure about seventy feet, while the whole length of the building is about a hundred and fifty feet, but a partition wall, dividing the chancel, destroys any effect of size.

The present roofless ruin is all that remains of the monastic establishment, here planted by the Irish Bishops, who, in the year A.D. 1203, placed Iona under the rule of the Abbot of Derry. Till this date, it was retained by the Fathers of the Culdee Church, who although burnt out and pillaged, over and over again (their monastery being finally destroyed in 1059) yet clung to the possession of the Isle till the Roman Church was built. Then the Culdees finally abandoned the Isle, and the Clugniac monks held it in undisputed possession. It was at this time that the nunnery was here established. About the end of the 15th century, Iona became the seat of the Bishop of the Isles, and the Abbey Church became his centre for ecclesiastical work.

Stormy and troublous times indeed were those during which his predecessors so perseveringly held their ground.<sup>1</sup> Again and again

<sup>1</sup> Pennant states that during the period of two hundred years, when the Norwegians held sway in the Isles, the Bishops of Iona were consecrated in the grand old Cathedral Church of St. Olaf at Trondhjem in Norway, and included Norwegians, Frenchmen, Scotch, and English. The Archbishop of Trondhjem was in fact Metropolitan of all the Highlands and Western Isles, of Sodor and Man, and of Orkney, and retained the ecclesiastical supremacy

were their homes laid waste, and their lives jeopardized by the incursions of savage Danes and Norsemen. Four times between the years A.D. 795 and 825 was the Isle ravaged and the Monastery burnt by the fierce Norsemen who, in 806, barbarously massacred sixty-eight members of the brotherhood, "The family of Iona." Their martyrdom is commemorated by the name of the peaceful little Bay of Martyrs, and the street leading thence. Only think what a life of continual anxiety was that of the brethren, never knowing whether the strange galleys that approached their shores were those of reverent pilgrims or ruthless pirates. We do not however hear of further massacres, till A.D. 986, when, on Christmas Eve, the savage Norsemen made another descent, murdering the Abbot and fifteen of his monks.

It was after this that Queen Margaret rebuilt the Chapel of St. Oran—a tiny and insignificant-looking place it seems to us, but one to which assuredly some unwonted influence was attached, for we hear how, when a few years later, Magnus Barefoot landed here with his wild hordes, he was the first to enter the chapel, but, awe-stricken, he started back, and closing the door, commanded that the place and the people should be left undisturbed.

Sad to say, the sacred ground which even barbarians thus revered, has been ruthlessly pillaged by modern Goths. Half the houses in the "Baile Mor," the "great town" of Iona, are said to have been built of materials quarried from the ecclesiastical ruins, and many of the beautiful sculptured gravestones, which marked the tombs of abbots and of kings, were plundered and carried off to many a graveyard on other isles, or on the mainland, there to do honour to some humble mortal, unknown to fame. Ere they were scattered, a Mr. Frazier, who visited Iona in A.D. 1688, collected three hundred inscriptions, which he presented to the Earl of Argyle, but these have unfortunately been lost.

Even the altar, which was of white marble, veined with grey,<sup>1</sup> has till the close of the 14th century, or even later—probably till the 15th century, when St. Andrews was created an Archbishopric.

<sup>1</sup> Supposed by Pennant to have been quarried at Kilchrist in the parish of Strath, Isle of Skye.

been carried off, though it was still in its place in 1772, at which period there were also some remains of the Bishop's Palace, which Sacheverell, writing in 1688, describes as "a large hall, open to the roof of a chamber," into which he supposes it must have been necessary to ascend by a ladder. Under this chamber was a buttery, the offices being probably outside, as was customary.

The Abbot's house stood to the westward.

According to the custom of the Culdee Church,<sup>1</sup> both in Scotland and Ireland, Iona was ruled by a Presbyter-Abbot, to whom was committed the entire jurisdiction in the province; the Bishop himself being subject to the Abbot, and retaining little distinctive precedence, except in the celebration of Divine service, and in the exercise of such unquestionably episcopal functions as ordination. In the case of Iona, this system was attributed by Bede to "the example of that first teacher of theirs, who was no Bishop, but a Presbyter and Monk."

The inmates of the monastery were inferior orders of presbyters and deacons, all the monks being ordained clergy, to whom the monastery was but a central clergy-house, whence they went forth, as occasion offered, to preach in the semi-pagan regions round about.

The "Baile Mor" to which I referred just now, consists of a row of about forty-six cottages, forming the "Straide," *i.e.* the Street, and containing a population of two hundred and forty persons—a little flock, which here, as everywhere in Scotland in these modern days, is divided into the adherents of the Free and

<sup>1</sup> The name of Culdee is supposed to be of Celtic derivation, meaning in old Irish "attendant on God." Another Celtic derivation gives the meaning as "men of seclusion." Writers in the 16th century derive it from Cultores Dei, "Worshippers of God." There was a Bishop in the North of Ireland about A.D. 800, known as Ængus the Ceile-De, by reason of his great holiness.

In A.D. 843 Brude, son of Dergand, last King of the Picts, gave the Island in Loch Leven, now called St. Serf's Isle, to God, St. Servan, and the Culdee hermits serving God there.

There were at least eight religious houses in Ireland called Culdees, one of which, at Armagh, survived till the beginning of the 17th century. It was described as "a college of secular priests, living in community."

the Established Church, each of which is represented by a Church and a pastor. The Free Church minister now lives across the Straits, on the Isle of Mull, having given up his manse to be converted into a simple but cosy little inn, where a true pilgrim (not content to "do" Iona and Staffa as hurried incidents in the course of one long day's excursion from Oban) can halt, and spend days of delight in the reverent and leisurely study of its hallowed ground, much of which he would fain traverse on his knees—at least figuratively!

Mere tourists who do the round trip in a day, of course only get about one hour on each isle—just time to run round helter-skelter from point to point, rushing with breathless speed in pursuit of a guide, who rapidly pours forth his concentrated history of each spot ere he hurries on to the next point—a history which they may digest at leisure, when they once more rush on board, feeling surely very much like over-fed turkeys on escaping from the clutches of a merciless crammer.

The velocity of their meal, however, depends a good deal on the season of the year; in other words, on the number of sheep which the steamer may have to carry from isle to isle, to or from their winter pastures; so that perhaps in the height of summer the halt may be somewhat more leisurely. And indeed, I am bound to confess that I felt I had wasted a good deal of compassion on the unhappy tourist flock when I noticed how many of them found time to spend fully half their allotted hour on the Holy Isle in eating and drinking, which they might as well have done on board!

But in any case, such visitors can by no possibility explore anything beyond the actual monastery, whereas to all lovers of old lore, there are places of very great interest in various parts of the island. I earnestly recommend all such, to allow themselves a few days on the Isle, days of such unbroken peace as can rarely be obtained at kindred sites. There is a charm even in the name of the little inn. Fancy being welcomed to St. Columba's Arms! To such as can appreciate the excellence and abundance of dairy produce, the bowls of creamy milk and snowy curds are an attraction in themselves.

Such fresh floury scones too, baked by the most motherly of Highland landladies! Who would not be a pilgrim to Iona to share such fare? Nevertheless neither fish, flesh, nor fowl are lacking for such as prefer more varied diet.

The little inn stands within a stone's-throw of the ruins—those once hospitable walls to which all comers were welcomed, but where now only a few sheep browse peacefully, while a colony of jackdaws find shelter in the crannies of the great Cathedral Tower. The Islanders have divers superstitions about these birds, which they would on no account molest. They maintain that since the days of Columba they have claimed a home in his monastery, and that their numbers have never either increased or decreased, but that they are uncanny birds, and know many things.

I confess I was sometimes tempted myself to agree with the latter clause, for there was something strangely weird in the way they guarded the old place, and resented the approach of human footsteps. Again and again I tried the experiment of whether I could not enter the sacred precincts under cover of night without arousing these vigilant birds, but invariably failed. I might wander wherever I pleased outside their domain, though within an easy stone's-throw, *but the moment I stepped within the gate*, how noiselessly soever I entered, the watchful sentinel sounded the alarm.

As I stood motionless in the deep shadow of the tower I could see him going his rounds, to waken the colony, who seemed to be sleepily remonstrating at being thus disturbed, and very much disposed to return to their slumbers, but the instant I ventured to move so much as a hand, the whole body started up with angry, querulous cawing, and after an instant of noisy confusion formed themselves into a close phalanx, a corps of observation, intent on watching every movement of the invader. Thenceforth not a cry was uttered, but in total silence this black cloud of witnesses swept backwards and forwards athwart the dark sky; no sound save that of multitudinous rushing of wings, which, like a blast of wind, one moment came sweeping close above my head, the next seemed to vanish into space, losing itself in the darkness, and anon returning,—at intervals of a couple of minutes—most eerie and ghostlike!

Often I tried to deceive them by moving rapidly along under cover of some dark wall or row of tall columns, but it was quite useless ; the dark cloud returned, straight as the flight of an arrow, not to the place where they had left the foe, but direct to the spot where I then stood. This invariably went on as long as I stood within the Cathedral walls. The very moment I stepped beyond it, the cawing recommenced, and continued while the black, living cloud, once more settled down on the ruined tower, and composed itself to sleep, not caring how long I might linger in the Reilig Orain, the sacred enclosure round St. Oran's Chapel, where sleep the kings, and saints, and warriors of old.

Very cold and still lay those sculptured effigies, showing as clear in the bright moonlight as at midday, nevertheless gaining from that soft reflected light, something of the mystery and peaceful calm, which is ever lacking in the glare of noon.

One lovely walk in the early summer morning, is up the green hill of Dunii, which though little more than 300 feet in height, is nevertheless the highest point of the island, which thence appears outspread, map-like, before us, while on every side, as far as eye can reach, the sea is dotted with countless islands, changing colour with the varying play of light, as showery cloud or glittering rainbow float over them, transforming cool pearly greys into living opal.

"Dark Ulva's Isle," the distant peaks of Jura, and Inch Kenneth claim our glance by turns, the latter—the Innis-Kenneth—having a special interest, on account of its ecclesiastical ruins : here for many centuries stood a college, dependent on Iona. Beside the altar in its little ruined chapel is a sculptured bas-relief of the Blessed Virgin, and all around are scattered a multitude of graves, on which are carved effigies of knights and ladies.

Facing us, across the narrow strait, rise the great hills of Mull, which, piled up in grand mountain masses, rise from behind the Ross of Mull—a huge rampart of red granite, contrasting strongly in colour with the clear aquamarine tints of the sea, toned here and there to richest purple by the great beds of brown sea-ware, which lie hidden beneath the water, themselves unseen, yet none the less



doing their part in that beautiful picture, and whispering a nature-parable on hidden influences.

A little further, the same sea is blue as the sky which it reflects—nay, bluer by some tones—a fair setting for the Holy Isle, with its long reaches of pure white shell sand, which gleam dazzlingly in the sunlight; and the eye hails the rich green grass and banks of delicious white clover and wild thyme which grows so luxuriantly wherever this white lime sand can find its way, and indeed all over the Machars (as these sandy reaches are called). Looking down from our green hill-top, on this scene of so many historic associations, it needed but a little play of fancy to pass over the intervening twelve centuries and call up visions of that old life, when in place of the solidly-built Cathedraï, the ruins of which lie before us, there existed but a few humble cells, clustering round a lowly chapel—a chapel, however, which exerted a mightier and more extended influence than falls to the lot of many of the world’s stateliest churches.

As a matter of course, to any one versed in the lore of the past, every corner of this Isle seems haunted by the spirits of Druids and Culdees, and the points of special attraction are those to which attaches some dream of olden days.

My favourite evening stroll was a solitary expedition across the moor towards the western side of the Isle, to the wildest rocky valley, where a small circle of stones is still dear to the islanders, as the Cappan Cuildich, or Tabernacle of the Culdees, for here, they say, it was, that the Standard of the Cross was first planted, and that the little band of Christians were wont to assemble in secret, to worship after the new fashion taught them by these strange Missionaries.

The circle was, however, probably of older date still; its avenue of carefully-placed stones seems rather to belong to the buildings we call Druidic, and whether as temple or tomb, was probably associated with the earlier form of worship. The mysterious gloom of this lonely glen seemed well in keeping with both traditions. I generally found my way there just as the closing day left the valley in deep shadow, often made darker still by heavy clouds overhead, which, closing in, carried the eye onward, to where the sea and

far away isles lay bathed in lurid sunset light. Not a sound was there to break the deep stillness of the hour, save when the shrill cry of the curlew, or the wail of some lonely sea-bird, woke the echoes for one little moment, only to be succeeded by silence more intense.

Returning thence in the deepening twilight, I loved to rest awhile on the green hillock overlooking the old monastery—the Tor Ab, St. Columba's favourite seat,—there to dream awhile of all the changing scenes that have been, as it were, dissolving views, successively taking form for a little season, during the course of ages unnumbered. Soon a golden glow in the eastern sky told that the great yellow moon was about to rise behind the hills of Mull; another moment, and the old Cathedral stood out in deepened shadow against the rippling silver of the intervening straits—those narrow straits, across which the brethren of the monastery used to ferry such pilgrims as had performed the weary journey on foot, across the rugged mountains.

One more point of great interest on the Isle is the Port-na-Churraich, or Harbour of the Boat, the spot where St. Columba and his brethren are said to have buried the frail coracle of wicker covered with hides, in which they sailed hither,—lest they should ever be tempted to return to their beloved Ireland. Ere taking this final step they climbed the neighbouring hill to ascertain that the Emerald Isle was no longer even in sight; hence the name of that hill is to this day the Cairn-cul-n'-Erin, denoting that henceforth they had turned their backs for ever on Erin's shore.

Wishing to visit this point by water, so as to miss none of the beauty of the many-coloured rocks which lie on the south side of the isle, I chartered a boat intending to row thither, close along the coast. The weather hitherto had been so faultless that any immediate change seemed impossible, and the dull grey clouds on the horizon spoke their warning so vainly, that I made no objection when the boatmen proceeded to hoist a sail. Clumsily in truth they did it, yet it was not till we were fairly under way that I realized that their unsteadiness was due to having been over well treated by their friends on board the steamboat, which had called

that morning, and in fact that the barley bree had done its work pretty effectually, as was proven by the volubility with which they argued and wrangled in Gaelic—an altercation, in an unknown tongue, being at all times particularly unpleasant to the unwilling ears that have to endure it.

Meanwhile the wind was rapidly freshening, and a heavy swell setting in, so that, instead of keeping sufficiently near the shore to distinguish its peculiarities, we spent the afternoon in making long and wearisome tracks, and by the time we reached our destination the waves had grown so angry that landing at all was a matter of considerable difficulty.

Once ashore, I deemed it more prudent and pleasant to find my way home alone, across the moor, greatly to the dismay of my boatmen, whose chivalry was not so clouded by their potations as to let them be willing to desert their charge in so wild a place. I am sure their minds were greatly relieved when, in the evening, on returning to the Baile Mor (the great town) they found me safe in my usual comfortable quarters, and it certainly was a relief to me to know that they had arrived in safety, which, when I left them, seemed highly problematic.

The spot on which we, like the Celtic fathers, landed, is a small bay, closed in by great rocks of gneiss—certainly not much of a harbour, to judge from the violence with which the great waves sweep in and dash themselves upon the beach—a beach composed wholly of hillocks of shingle, consisting chiefly of green quartz and serpentine, and red felspar, all glittering like jewels when wet with mist and spray; very pretty too look at, but most unpleasant to scramble over.

These pebbles have ever been valued by pilgrims as charms, or at any rate as portable and interesting relics, so the children make occasional expeditions across the Isle, and collect stores of the brightest, which they offer for sale to the steamboat passengers, as memorials of their short hour on Iona. Sometimes large glossy seeds, brought by the Gulf Stream from their birthplace in the tropics, are here washed ashore, and great is the luck that awaits the finder of one of these precious Iona beans.

In the middle of this stony expanse lies one small grassy hillock, just the shape of a boat lying keel uppermost ; and, curiously enough, corresponding in size to the measurements of St. Columba's Curragh. This is the place where it is supposed to be buried, and the only spot where (doubtless out of compliment to the Emerald Isle) the grass contrives to grow.

A little further, and far above reach of the highest tide, the shingle is heaped up into innumerable great cairns, said to have been piled, stone by stone, by penitents working on their knees, in expiation of divers crimes. A more painful and wearisome form of treadmill could hardly be devised than that of which these heaps are still the tokens.

Turning away from this dreary scene, for once sympathizing with Montalembert's colourless description of the grey and misty Hebridean sea, and cold inhospitable shores, I made the best of my way across the hills towards the cathedral, guided by the position of the neighbouring islands, the near green hills being nowhere so high as to conceal the sea for long.

The storm was gathering fast, and a cold chilling blast would scarcely suffer me to linger a moment at the Pit-an-druidh, the cairn which marks the burial-place of Columba's predecessors. An old man who "had the English" in addition to his Gaelic mother tongue, told me that he had seen this grave opened by men who doubted the tradition, and that sure enough they had found a great heap of human bones, all of which were reverently replaced. It was well, however, to have found this tangible proof of the actual presence of men, whose shadowy memory has been almost wholly lost in the dim mist of ages. I felt, while standing beside those lonely graves, that there was something strangely in keeping with their desolation, in the wild wailing of the sobbing wind, which seemed to echo the dirge-like moaning of the sullen waves, as if murmuring a solemn requiem for the forgotten dead.

Near this place stands the only cottage still remaining on the Isle, with the old-fashioned fire-place hollowed in the centre of the earthen floor, and with no chimney except a hole in the middle of the roof. Its inmates gave me cordial welcome, my old friend who

“ had the English ” being the gude-man of the house, so he heaped on fresh peats, and invited me to sit awhile and chat beside the cheery blaze. He pointed out the manifold advantages of a fire-place that allowed of no monopoly, but round which the whole family could always gather, and as to the idea of any extra danger being involved, he could only say he had reared as promising a brood as any father could desire, and no accident had ever befallen his hearth. As to the smoke, they were used to it, and really had little more than their neighbours, whose wide chimneys let in as much cold air as they let out smoke. So you see a central fire has its advantages even in domestic life.<sup>1</sup>

In former days it was convenient in some other respects, to which the good old man did not care to allude—old pagan customs which were faithfully observed for many a century by those who were very good Christians in the main ; such as walking solemnly round the fire, or leaping across its flames. One of the most remarkable customs of this class, which was kept up in parts of the Highlands till certainly the beginning of this century, was that of taking a newly baptized child, and handing it across the fire to some person opposite ; or else, its father would take the child in his arms and leap across the hearth. This was done thrice, the child being thus made to pass through the flames, in truly Moloch-ian or Baal-istic form. After the ceremony each person present took three spoonfuls of meal and water, or something stronger.

Sometimes the child was placed in a basket, covered with a white cloth, and cheese and oat-cake being placed beside it, the basket was suspended from the crook in the fire-place, which was moved round thrice sun-wise. Moreover, every person entering the house, was required to take up a burning fire-brand from the hearth, and therewith cross himself, before he ventured to approach a new-born child or its mother. It was also customary to carry a burning peat sun-wise round an unbaptized infant and its mother, to protect them from evil spirits.

<sup>1</sup> This central place of honour is still reserved for the hearth in most cottages on the Long Island. The people say it keeps the house warmer, and the smoke answers the same purpose !

These customs seem to have formed part of the ceremony to which Pope Gregory alluded, when speaking of *Pagan baptism*—a ceremony in which both fire and water were employed by the Druids in honour of Neith, their goddess of waters.

When I left the cottage, the darkness was falling fast, but I soon struck a familiar track, and was not sorry once more to find myself safe in the cosy little inn. That night there was no moonlight visit to the jackdaws or to the ghostly kings. Such boats as had put out to sea were hurrying home, and the fishers were preparing for foul weather. All night long the waves roared, and the winds raved and shook the shutterless windows till we were fain to own that the name of Ithona, the Isle of Waves, was as just a description as Ishona, the Blessed Isle, which hitherto we had believed to be the name most suitable to so calm and peaceful a retreat.

But with the dawn the angry waves were hushed, and the sea that had been churned like yeast gradually subsided, only heaving as though still sullen, till at length, as if exhausted with its own passion, it once more lay still, and calm, and smiling, breaking in tiny ripples on the white sands of the Martyrs' Bay, once reddened with the life-blood of "the family" of Iona.

## CHAPTER IV.

## THE INNER HEBRIDES.

**Staffa—From Oban to Skye—Lismore—Mull—Legend of Castle Duart—Legend of Lochbuy—Legend of Loch Awe—Isle of Canna—St. Michael's Eve—How observed in Barra—Nordereys and Sudereys—Isle of Muck—Wild Boar of Scotland—Wolves—Beavers—Isle of Rum—Scur of Eigg—Proud Lords of the Isles—The Isle of Mists.**

**DISTINCTLY** visible from Iona, at a distance of about eight miles, lies Staffa—"the Isle of Columns,"—so its name signifies in the Scandinavian dialect. An island now as famous for its natural wonders, as Iona for its human associations, though, strange to say, while the latter has from time immemorial been a centre of attraction, first to the Pagan, and then to the Christian world, the fame of Staffa dates back only for one century. It is just one hundred years since its wonderful caves were first discovered by Sir Joseph Banks, whose glowing descriptions drew thither a handful of geologists and men of letters.

Now the name of the Isle is a household word in the mouths of thousands of tourists who pour in thither day by day, throughout the summer, and spend one little hour rushing from cave to cave, disturbing the solemn echoes with their howling and hooting, to the unspeakable disgust of the seals, and cormorants, and white seamews, whose solitude is thus rudely invaded—to say nothing of the feelings of the mighty Fingal, whose spirit is supposed still to haunt the wondrous cavern that bears his name.

I need not say how eminently unsatisfactory to many minds, must be such a mode of scampering over one of nature's most awe-

inspiring works. But the only way in which it is possible for any one not yachting to see it more leisurely, is by remaining at Iona, or Ulva, and taking a boat thence for the day. And truly, it is well worth this exertion, to know the inexpressible delight of standing alone within that glorious cave, with no sound of jarring human voice to disturb the sacred silence of that grand temple, "not made with hands," but reared by the great Creator Himself. A wondrous fane indeed, with the perfect symmetry of its countless gigantic columns, and marvellous roof, formed (like the strange pavement outside, and like the gallery on which we stand,) of the broken bases of hexagonal pillars, which fit together in faultless honeycomb.

The colouring, too, is a marvel of beauty, for this basalt combines every tint of rarest marble, that ever human skill brought together, to decorate the costliest temple. Warm red and brown and richest maroon tones prevail, but the whole gleams with green and gold lichen and sea-weed, while here and there a mosaic of pure white lime has filtered through, encrusting the pillars, which seem transformed to snowy alabaster.

Ever and anon, the innermost depths of the great chancel, gleam with a sudden flash, as the clear green wave comes swelling in, overflowing the causeway of broken pillars that forms so marvellous a pavement, and breaking in pure white foam, which shows more dazzling against the gloom of that sombre back-ground, and casting trembling reflecting lights, which trickle and waver over every hidden crevice of roof, or clustered columns.

Quick as thunder-roar follows the lightning-flash, is that white gleam succeeded by a booming sound, louder than the thunder itself, yet mellow as the sweetest note of some huge organ, and wakening echoes deeper and more sonorous than ever throbbed through dim cathedral aisle ;—echoes which linger and repeat themselves on every side, and are but hushed for one moment of awful silence while the exquisite green water recedes, only to rush back again with renewed force, re-awakening that thrillingly-solemn chorus, which, in ages long gone, earned for this cave its old Gaelic name of *Uaimh Bhinn*, "the melodious cavern."



Altogether it is a scene of which no words can convey the smallest idea, and as we pass suddenly from the glaring sunlight into that cool deep shade, and look down into the wondrous depths of that world of clear crystalline green, we cannot choose but believe that we have invaded the chosen home of some pure spirit of the sea—some dainty Undine, whose low musical notes we can almost think we discern, mingling with the voice of the waves.

For me this cavern has acquired a special interest, since the day when one of my kinsmen narrowly escaped finding here a briny grave, among the seals and cormorants. He had come by steamer, and landed in its boat. Then had scrambled along from one basaltic pillar to another, till he was far in the interior of the cave, when a terrified shout from those outside, made him turn round, to see the whole mouth of the cave darkened by one mighty green wave, pouring its volume of water towards the spot where he stood.

There was not a second to lose, but by a quick flash of inspiration, he remembered having, a moment before, observed one pillar so detached from its fellows, that a man could clasp it; and springing to the spot where it stood, he grasped it, with so firm a hold, that though the rushing waters boiled and surged above his head, he was safe—and when the wave receded, he was able to follow it, and rejoin the more cautious friends who, pale with terror, were watching to see his drowned body floating on the water. The steamboat authorities remonstrated with him for his imprudence, but were quite pacified on his assuring them that he had no wish to do it again! It seems that this occasional big wave is a well-known feature of this sea, and one for which the wary are always on the alert.

Although the chief interest of the isle, naturally attaches to Fingal's Cave, there are many others, whose beguiling beauty might well bid us linger awhile in each. Such are "Mackinnon's" and the "Boat Cave"—the latter so called because it can only be entered by a boat. But more curious than these, is that known as the "Clam-shell," where the huge columns, instead of standing vertically, lie bent like the curved ribs of a ship, showing at *both ends* of the pillars the invariable honeycomb pattern, and telling of some strange and unwonted influence, which must have affected the

mass of molten basalt, and prevented its assuming its regular upright form.

But it is time we passed on to other isles; else you will never have patience to listen to the story of our further wandering. From Iona we, of course, returned to Oban, that great centre of all the West Coast steamers and coaches, thence starting at day-break for the Isle of Skye, and a more exquisite fifteen hours' sail than this proved, could not well be imagined. The sea was like glass, or oil, or whatever you can think of, that is most smooth and mellow.

“Each puny wave in diamonds rolled  
O'er the calm deep, where hues of gold  
With azure strove, and green.”

Every peak and shapely outline of island or mainland lay before us in ethereal lilac. On the one side Ben Cruachan, without a cloud, on the other, the wild beautiful ranges of Mull, while before us lay the green isle of Lismore “the Great Garden” famous in the ecclesiastical history of the Isles, as the ancient seat of the Bishops of Argyle, whose Castle of Auchindoun crowned a high crag overlooking the island, and the stormy waters of the Sound of Mull. The Cathedral of Lismore was dedicated to St. Muluag, a saint of the seventh century. The chief peculiarity is that it seems to have consisted of only a choir and chantry, for there appears to be no trace of nave or transepts.

Every rock, every inlet, every old castle has its own tradition. Of one desert rock, a mile from Castle Duart, on the shore of Mull, it is told how the chief of the Macleans, having married the Lady Elizabeth, the daughter of Archibald, second Earl of Argyle, thereby incurred the wrath of his own clan, who swore that the blood of the Campbells should never rule over them. Rather than this, they would slay both the lady and her little one.

The cowardly husband consented to remain passive. One dark winter's night, they forced her into a small boat, and without pity for her tears and cries, left her on this barren rock, which at high tide is covered by the waves. Slowly the tide rose; and in her bitter anguish she cried in vain in the darkness, and yet there was

no voice that answered—no friendly fisher had spread his nets near that treacherous rock. The remorseless waves crept on and on, lipping so gently over her white feet, and silently stealing upward, till she stood knee-deep in the cold, icy darkness; and still her straining ear could catch no sound of welcome oars. Only the white sea-birds circled round, and mingled their sharp, piercing cries with her own.

The cruel waters had reached her breast, as the first flush of dawn streaked the east, when a tiny skiff came in sight. With agonized effort she managed to attract attention. The fishers proved to be some of Argyle's men, who, having thus rescued their lady from the very brink of the grave, soon brought her safely to her father's castle. Here she remained hidden till a solemn announcement of her death was sent by her disconsolate husband, who of course had connived at the abduction of the lady.

Presently he arrived, with his kinsmen and followers, all clad in deepest dule, to mingle their lamentations with those of her bereaved father. Argyle received them, also clad in black, and a solemn feast was prepared in the great hall; when the door opened, and the lady entered, superbly dressed, and calmly took her seat at the table. Maclean sprang up aghast, and escaped as far as the castle gate, where the Lord of Lorne, following, slew him as he fled. His kinsmen were made prisoners, and detained as hostages for the safety of the infant, which had been saved by its nurse, and was in due time restored to its mother.

It fared worse, however, with another infant chief of these turbulent Macleans, whose young life was forfeited as a sure revenge on his father. The story runs that Maclean of Lochbuy went forth on a grand hunting expedition, taking with him his wife and only child, the latter being still in the arms of his nurse. The deer, hotly pursued by the hounds, came swiftly up the glen, but turning aside by the narrow pass, guarded only by one of Maclean's vassals, they burst past him, and escaped. The chief, in dire wrath, caused the man to be instantly stripped and flogged in presence of the clan, a degradation which the hot Highland blood could not brook.

Before that day was done, the insult was amply avenged, for the forester, burning with rage, watched his opportunity, and in a moment snatched the heir of Lochbuy from the arms of the nurse, and, bounding from rock to rock with the speed of a red deer, he reached an almost inaccessible crag overhanging the sea which boiled below.

The screams of the agonized mother, the anguish of the father, were as music and balm to the triumphant Highlander, who laughed aloud as he held the shrieking child outstretched above the waters. In mad despair Maclean craved forgiveness, and prayed for the life of his only little one. At length Allastair relented, and made conditions with his chief. He agreed to restore the child, provided Maclean would bare his own back to the cord, and submit to be publicly scourged, as he had been, in presence of his clansmen.

To their grief and indignation the chief consented, and calmly underwent the penalty that must for ever degrade him in their eyes, hoping thereby to save his child. Then turning once more to the pinnacle where Allastair still stood high in mid-air, he bade him fulfil his promise and restore the child. With a burst of fiendish laughter the vassal held the child aloft, and crying aloud "Avenged! avenged!" he sprang from the cliff, still grasping the infant. In another second the raging waters had closed above him, and sucked him down into some deep basaltic cavern, whence, says the legend, neither wave nor storm ever brought back the body of man or child, to the wailing mother, who day after day, through long years, wandered wearily, seeking for her little one in every crevice of those cruel rocks.

Beautiful Ben Cruachan has also his own legend to tell, concerning the formation of Loch Awe—a story handed down by a long line of Gaelic bards, from the days of Ossian himself, even to the present time. He tells how, in by-gone ages, the Cailleach Vera or Bera, the aged daughter of Griannan, the Mountain of the Sun, kept ceaseless vigil on his summit. To her charge had been committed a certain spring on the top of the highest crag, and her duty it was each night, to seal up the mouth of the fountain, laying thereon a mystic stone, carved with strange symbols, ere the sun's last ray had kissed the mountain-top.

For many long ages she had done her work faithfully, and prosperity blessed the fertile lands around. But in an evil hour, Vera was overcome by the gentlest of all insidious foes. When the wild deer gathered around her, waiting to be milked, one refractory hind darted away from the herd, and Vera followed her, over moor and moss, till her aged limbs were weary ; so on returning to her seat beside the fountain, she laid her down to rest in the sunny noontide, and a sweet dreamy sleep stole over her.

The day wore on—the shadows of evening crept up the mountain-side. Vainly did the sun's last rays gleam on the sleeper. The fountain still lay unsealed, and the murmuring of its waters only lulled her into deeper slumber. The darkness closed around, and with it came a mighty tempest, but still Vera slept. Three times the sun rose and set, ere she awoke from that strange deep dream-world. Starting up, she remembered her duty, and sought to seal the fountain with the mystic stone. But instead of its quiet waters, a raging torrent now poured down the mountain-side, and all the flood-gates of heaven seemed open ; while crashing thunder rolled amid the hills.

Then, as she glanced downward to the valley of Lorn, hitherto the greenest and most fertile land in all Argyle, she beheld only a raging sea of dark, stormy waters ; and Vera the Aged trembled, for she knew what mischief her ill-timed sleep had wrought. Even to this day, the waters lie in the valley ; and in wild wintry squalls they can still rage as madly as when first they flooded the land ; and the fisher, whose frail boat has battled with those black waves, will tell you that at such times Loch Awe is “awesome” indeed.

But when the great lake, with its green islands and overhanging birches, lies bathed in peaceful sunlight, shepherd and fisher alike confess that Vera's sleep was no dire evil after all. One little island in the midst of those broad waters has for centuries been dear to the hearts of the people. They call it Inishail ; and here in olden days an order of Cistercian nuns found a calm retreat, and solemn chaunts and litanies rose from that old chapel, and floated upward through the sunlit air.

Here, too, many a solemn funeral procession came rowing up the

lake, while women's voices wailed shrill coronachs, and the pipes played wild pibrochs and laments. For from many a distant valley the dead were brought, that they might sleep within sound of holy prayer and psalm. Here, even to this day, new generations are laid beside their fathers, but the boat that bears them comes and goes in silence ; for some of the " unco guid " fear that the bagpipes are wicked, so the old pathetic music has been put down, and no sound now breaks the stillness, save the shrill cries of the beautiful oystercatchers, or the liquid whistle of the curlew. But wild flowers innumerable lend their honeyed fragrance to this sweet and quiet spot, where a tremulous cloud of blue-bells veils each nameless grave, their dainty cups scarce stirred by the faint breezes, which seem as though they loved to linger here.

A silent, lonely resting-place is this little island of the dead, floating on the clear, blue waters ; while the great hills watch on every side, in grand shadowy masses, as if guarding that store-house of most precious dust.

Beautiful as we may deem this lovely lake, its creation was a cause of bitter grief to poor old Cailleach Vera, who straightway forsook her home on Ben Cruachan, and passed over to the Emerald Isle, where a hilly range at Lough Crew still bears her name. Here she busied herself in piling a great number of cairns of all sizes, which remain to this day. In an evil hour, however, she contrived to break her neck, and several Irish traditions record her burial near one of these great tumuli. One of the most curious Dolmens in County Meath is commonly known as her house, while a roughly-hewn stone seat, quaintly engraven with mystic lines and circles, is shown as her chair.

As we sail onward, legends seem to multiply. A wild tale was told us of the little Island of Canna, lying on the other side of Rum. On the top of a high rock, quite detached from the Isle, are the ruins of a small castle, to which the sole access is by a dangerous, almost precipitous path among the crags. This is

" Canna's tower, that, steep and grey,  
Like falcon-nest o'erhangs the bay."

From these giddy turrets a fair woman looked and watched through many weary years for the help that never came. One of the cruel Ocean Lords had brought her from foreign shores, and being madly jealous of her beauty, chose this grim fortress as a cage meet for his lovely captive ; and many a time the boatmen passing near her prison saw her weeping on the castle wall, or heard a plaintive song in some strange unknown tongue. Even to this day they whisper how the fishers who pass by that grey crag in the moonlight have heard low music of a lute, and the sad heart-broken cry of a woman.

When Pennant visited this island in the middle of last century he was much struck by the multitude of horses, in proportion to the few scattered herds of sheep ; and also noticed a quaint old trace of sun-worship, like that practised in Iona, namely, that on the Eve of St. Michael the people assembled at the Cladha, or grave-yard, where every lad mounted his horse without saddle, taking some lass *en croupe*. He might take his neighbour's wife if he pleased, but not his own. The couples then rode in procession from the village to an old stone cross, doubtless originally a pre-Christian menhir, round which they rode thrice sunwise, afterwards returning to the village inn, where the lass treated her swain, and all present shared a huge oat cake, made in the form of a quadrant of a circle, and daubed with milk and eggs. The cake was so large as to consume two pecks of meal. Of the origin of this quaint custom, the people knew nothing, save its antiquity. The identical ceremony was also observed in the Long Island, and North and South Uist, of all which St. Michael was patron saint. The festival was called "the Oda." After making the sunwise turns, the day was devoted to horse-racing of the most primitive type.

Even on lone St. Kilda, this singular custom was long kept up. The Rev. Kenneth Macaulay, writing in A.D. 1764, tells that he found this people possessed of ten little ponies, and St. Michael's Day was celebrated by bare-backed races, without stirrup or bridle—after which all the people ate "large loaves" dedicated to the Saint !

Strange to say, in the small Isle of Barra, immediately to the

south of South Uist, the same custom is still practised, not on St. Michael's Day, Sept. 29th, but on Sept. 25th, a day sacred to St. Barr, the patron saint of the isle, albeit ignored in the Romish Calendar. To him are dedicated two small chapels at Kil-Bar, and, on this festival, the people (who are almost all Roman Catholics) first meet to hear mass in the chapel at Borge, on the other side of the Island, and then they mount their rough ponies, every man taking up some woman behind him, and so they ride across the Isle, and go thrice sunwise round the ruined chapels. Instead of the girls standing treat at the inn, in the modernized fashion of Canna, these Barra lassies are expected to provide a lot of wild carrots, as a delicate attention to their escorts.

The green island of Canna yields sweet pasture to lowing herds of kine ; and calm pictures of pastoral life meet you at every turn, telling the every-day story of many a quiet life, begun, continued, and ended on this lonely sea-girt rock. Those who have dwelt among its people tell of their generous kindness to the strangers, but never fail to wonder at the strange under-tone of melancholy which seems to pervade the whole character of all these islanders, as though a life-long communing with mists and waves had enfolded their spirits in a silent chill, such as comes over even the unimaginative and the full-fed, when wandering on some barren moor, with cold, grey, spiritual mists floating on every side.

Perhaps these people of Canna grow weary of "the ever-sounding and mysterious main," for from time immemorial they have laid their dead on the furthest point inland, where only a distant murmur of the sea can reach them. A little rugged kirkyard it is ; a field of rank waving grass, dotted with grey rocks, carried thither from the shore, to mark the resting-place of the sleepers ; while a broken cross of yellow sandstone, guards this lone God's-acre. It is one of those stones that tells, perhaps, of ancient superstitions, for on it are carved divers emblems of unknown meaning ; amongst others, a camel, the sole instance in which that Eastern treasure appears in Scottish sculpture. There also remain some traces of a church, once dedicated to St. Columba.

The present population of the Isle is under three-score persons.



Pennant, writing in 1776, says he found here 220 souls, of whom all but four families were Roman Catholic. The parish minister and the priest both resided on Eigg, but came occasionally across the stormy seas to visit their flock on Canna, and these, with praiseworthy moderation, attended the ministrations of whichever chanced to come.

Then, as now, there was famine in the land, for though the Isles looked green, the people were in such dire want "that numbers had for a long time had neither bread nor meal for their poor babes. Fish and milk was their sole subsistence at this time—the first, a precarious diet, for their stock of fish-hooks was almost exhausted." He had brought ribbons as gifts, but felt that a few dozen fish-hooks, or a few pecks of meal, would have been of far greater value.

Every ledge of this rocky coast is the abode of countless sea-birds. All along the face of the crags they make their home—they float on the waters, and they glide in mid-air, with ceaseless, yet varying cry. White gulls and grey gulls; kittiwakes and sea-swallows; black-headed gulls and snowy gannets; cormorants innumerable, with black glistening plumage, and long necks that rise snake-like from the water; and, quaintest of all, the little puffins with their thick scarlet beaks, peeping out from the old rabbit-holes, or teaching their fluffy infants their first lessons in a life on the ocean wave.

We were now rounding the Point of Ardnamurchan, a bluff, windworn headland, against which a heavy surge continually beats, the strong tides here keeping up a ceaseless turmoil, though the sea all around be calm, as it was this day. This is the most westerly point of Scotland, and in olden times an imaginary line from this point divided the Hebrides into two sovereignties, those to the north being Nordereys, the others Sudereys. When the land was divided into Episcopates, the latter were assigned to the Bishop of Man. Hence the title "Sodor and Man." The Nordereys were subject to the ecclesiastical government of Iona, and now form part of the Bishopric of Argyle and The Isles.

We next passed the low green pasture lands, which form the Isle of Muck, or Mouach, the isle of swine, once probably the haunt

of the wild boar, which has bequeathed its name to many a hill and valley. I should rather have said the wild sow. The boar has namesakes of its own, as Beinn-an-tuirc, but the sow has Scur-na-Mouach, Sloch-Muick, the swine's pass, Muckerach, Stron-na-Muich, Ben Muich Dhù, Glen Muick, Loch Muick, Dun-a-muc, Muckairn. There are also two other isles known as Eilan-na-Muck, to say nothing of the Boar of Badenoch and the Sow of Athol on the Highland line! while in Ireland we find Muck Island and Port Muck, near Belfast, and the Abbey of Muck-a-more, the great sow, near Antrim, and Muck-ross on the lake of Killarney.

It is believed by some learned authorities that swine were held sacred by our ancestors. We know for a fact that they were so amongst the Gauls, and that they had the run of the sacred oak-groves of the Druids, where they found a plentiful supply of acorns, and were treated with all possible respect.

A curious hint of some strange reverence for this ungainly creature has been brought to light, by the discovery in a tumulus at Beregonium, near Oban, of an urn, in which were stored precious bones and teeth, which Professor Owen has pronounced to be unmistakably those of a pig! It is quite possible that our ancestors had adopted this symbolism from the ancient Scandinavian mythology; from which, also, they had borrowed the custom of gracing the Christmas or Yule festival with the wild boar's head.

Whether a lingering feeling of the homage due to the wild boar had anything to do with its use as an ecclesiastical decoration, I leave others to decide; certain it is that among the records of the old cathedral at St. Andrew's (anciently called Muckross, the sow's headland), it is stated that in A.D. 1520 a gigantic boar was killed, which had slain both men and cattle. The tusks were sixteen inches in length, and were attached to the high altar. Probably, however, their position had no deeper reason than the caprice of some reverend Ninrod, just as in the far east, we see the beautiful ibex horns and other trophies of the chase, nailed up upon the hill temples, by the Pahari sportsmen.

We had left behind us in Cantyre one noted haunt of these grim old tuskers, namely, Beinn-an-tuirc, the hill of the wild boar,

where Diarmid, Fingal's mightiest hunter, slew a terrible beast which had long ravaged the land. But Connan of the little soul was jealous of Diarmid's fame, and sought to compass his death. Now, Diarmid, like Achilles, was only vulnerable in the heel. Therefore Connan, with fair words of praise, bade him measure the length of the boar. Diarmid was barefooted, but he measured from snout to tail, and the bristles bent beneath his foot. But Connan bade him measure backwards, and a venomous bristle pierced his heel, so that he died.

Then all the mighty hunters cried out in their grief, because Diarmid, the swift of foot and the sure of aim, lay dead. And his beautiful wife, Grian, the golden-haired daughter of the Sun, heard that evil had befallen him, and she hastened to his aid. But as she hurried on, it chanced that one drew a bow at a venture, and the arrow pierced her heart, so that she fell mortally stricken. Then they carried her to the side of Diarmid, and laid the Beautiful and the Mighty in one grave. And all the heroes stood around in grief, and Fingal, leaning on his spear, wept bitterly in silence. And Diarmid's hounds gathered close round his bier, and large tears fell from their soft faithful eyes, because they had loved Diarmid with exceeding love.

Speaking of the wild boar, it is interesting to remember that all those places in the English lakes in which the word Greys occurs, as Gryesdale-tarn, near Helvellyn, Gryesfell, Grasmere, and also such names as Eversley, Evershot, and Evershaw (derived from *eufer*, the wild boar), bear testimony to his presence there in olden days, though he has long since passed away, together with the wolves and the beavers, both of which have likewise bequeathed their names to some of their old haunts, such as Wolferton near Sandringham, Wolferlow in Hereford, and Wolvesey near Winchester, where the Welsh used to pay their annual tribute of wolves' heads.

The beavers have left many a trace of their favourite retreats in the midland counties, where we find such names as Bevercoates, Beverstone, and Beverley, which are all said to mark the beaver's haunts. So, we are told, do sundry Welsh names, such as Nant

Francon, Llyn-y-Afrange, and Sarn-yr-Afrande, that is, the broad-tailed, which being interpreted, are the beaver's dale, the beaver's pool, and the beaver's dam. Curious, is it not, to think that these shy, strange creatures should once have been so abundant in Scotland, that their fur was a considerable article of trade, the duty to be levied thereon being among the items recorded in the Acts of Parliament of David I., King of Scotland?

As to the wolves, it is said that the last of that grisly race was slain in 1680 by the spear of Sir Ewen Cameron.

Still we sail onwards, startling the sea-birds, which float in busy, noisy crowds, wherever the herring lead them, and scarcely deign to rise from the water at our approach. From the very bows of the ship they float upwards in white and grey clouds, and hover around us for a few seconds with angry cries, then once more returning to the herring shoals, they recommence fishing in good earnest.

Behind the green shores of Muick (the Eilan-na-Muchel as its people call it), rise the purple, pyramidal peaks of Rum or Ronin—the wildest and most beautiful island of the group, known ecclesiastically as “The Parish of Small Isles,” which consists of Muck, Eigg, Rum, and Canna. The two highest rocky cones are known as Haskeval and Haleval. Green pasture lands, and purple heather, clothe those deep mountain-sides, where bleating flocks pick their dangerous way among the grey crags. But to-day all is bathed in a soft lilac haze, veiling such small detail; and the beautiful hills stand out in grand simple form, all reflected faultlessly in the glassy sea, which, except in the wake of our vessel, is literally without a ripple. A few fishing-boats, with rich brown sails, vainly crave one little breeze to speed them on their way. Sorely must their patience be tried with such long waiting, and we need not wonder if they watch us speeding onward with something of the feeling of the old boatman, who for the first time saw a steamer working against wind and tide, and as he watched her red chimney pouring forth its volume of black smoke, cried out, “Get awa’ wi’ your deil’s reek; I’m just sailing as it pleases the breath o’ God!”

If it had not been for the “Deil’s reek” we should have made but little progress on this calm glorious day. As it was, new

beauties revealed themselves at every turn. On the one hand lay Loch Moidart, opening into the mainland. Here stand the ruins of Castle Tyrin, burnt by Clanranald, its own laird, when starting to fight at Sheriff-muir, to prevent the Campbells from gaining possession of it.

Then comes the Scur of Eigg, a huge rocky mass of porphyry lowering like some stupendous Tower of Babel, from a mighty rampart of dark trap rock and columnar basalt, the latter inclining to slender columns, few exceeding one foot in diameter. Some of these have fallen; others are broken across and form a curious pavement of honeycomb pattern. Hugh Miller tells us that this whole mass overlies a vast forest of petrified trees,<sup>1</sup> an extinct species of pine, now lying below the encroaching waves, but still telling its own mysterious story of the broad greenwood that flourished here before that strange columnar cliff had been upheaved, and cooled and split into those tall pillars—a forest haunted by hideous reptiles, which have bequeathed their fossil remains to gladden the geologists of the nineteenth century. Now, not one twig exists to whisper of the old forest, and the great fort of the giants towers in naked majesty above the low grassy island. Its height is, I believe, 1340 feet.

Here a terrible deed of vengeance was once enacted. Some of the Macleods landed on this island of the Macdonalds, and, being too marked in their attentions to the daughters of the clan, were seized, bound hand and foot, and then turned adrift in a boat to perish. A kindly wind, however, wafted them safely to Skye. Their version of the story roused the wrath of Macleod, who collected a very strong body of men, and sailed to the island to take summary vengeance.

The terrified inhabitants, knowing themselves powerless to meet such a force, concealed themselves so effectually, that Macleod returned to his galleys, thinking that his victims had taken refuge in the Long Island. One unhappy man, however, ventured from his hiding-place, and was immediately espied, and tracked through the snow to a cave, the entrance to which was partly concealed by

<sup>1</sup> *Pinites Eiggensis*, an ancient tree of the Oolite.

a stream of water falling over it. This, the Macleods now turned into a new channel, and gathering a vast heap of turf and fern at the mouth of the cave, made such a bonfire as suffocated all the luckless islanders—200 in number—and their bleached bones lay here for many a long day. Sir Walter Scott was barbarous enough to carry off a skull, to the great annoyance of his sailors, who vowed that the wearisome calms which kept the vessel stationary for so long, were all in consequence of this sacrilege.

These old Highlanders were swift in their revenge, and I don't fancy the hot blood is altogether quenched yet. It is not so very long since the duty of forgiveness being urged on a dying man, he was reminded in Whose hands vengeance must lie. "Ay," said the would-be penitent, "it is too sweet a morsel for mortal man." "Weel, weel," he added, "I'll forgive him." But (turning to his son), "De'il take ye, Donald, gin ye forgie him." It was the same spirit that inspired one of another race, who being asked on his death-bed whether he could forgive all his foes, sank back with a grim smile of satisfaction, murmuring, "*Je n'en ai plus. Je les ai tous écrasés !*"

There is another great cave in this neighbourhood, where in the days of persecution after 1745, a large body of Roman Catholics used to meet for public worship, a huge ledge of rock acting as pulpit and altar—a wild temple indeed, with the ceaseless voice of the restless wind and waves murmuring solemn litanies on every side.

We neared Skye in the beautiful evening light, first coasting along the Peninsula of Sleat, which seemed fertile and well wooded, the latter being by no means a common feature in these islands. We caught a glimpse of Armadale, the home of the Macdonalds, Lords of the Isles—proud chiefs who carried the sense of their sovereignty with them, wherever their wanderings might lead them. One chief, best known as Donald Gorm, having found his way to Ireland, was bidden to the Lord-Lieutenant's table, and entering late, took a vacant seat near the door. His host sent to ask him to come to the head of the table ; but the chieftain's reply, more proud than courteous, was, to "tell the carle, that wherever Macdonald sits, that is the head of the table."







Macdonald made the same speech to Macleod of Dunvegan, on whose shores he was driven by stress of weather, during one of the interminable feuds of these two houses. He claimed hospitality from his foe, and was welcomed. But seeing on the table a boar's head, which he held to be an evil omen, he seated himself below the salt, in the midst of his own men, and when Macleod bade him come up beside him, made this same reply. This passed off well enough, but later, a quarrel arose as to the merits of their respective dirks and the strong right hand which wielded them; then a whispered caution from a Macleod lass to a Macdonald sweetheart, made the chief decide not to sleep in the castle, but remain with his men in the barn prepared for them, whence at midnight they silently sallied forth and took refuge under a great rock; soon they beheld a broad sheet of flame from the old barn lighting up sea and sky, the dry heather prepared for their couch having done its work well, as fuel to kindle that treacherous "lowe." And while the Macleods rejoiced over their own vile misdeeds, the Macdonalds marched calmly back to their galley, with their pipes playing, and with a shout of defiance, the blazing and crackling of that inhospitable roof lighting them on their way.

We were now passing through the Sound of Sleat, and the warm flush of sunset lighted up the wild beauty of Knoydart and Glenelg, "the glen of beauty;" and gleamed on the waters of Loch Nevis, and dark Loch Hourn, the lakes of heaven and of hell. Now we are in the channel of Kyle Rhea, "Straits of the King," which separates Skye from the mainland; it is but half a mile across, and lies under the shadow of Ben na Caillach, "the old wife's hill," which looms dark and huge above us.

Then comes another narrow channel, Kyle Akin, Straits of Haco, and we pass the islands of Scalpa and Raasay, and all this time we are drawing nearer and nearer to the great shadowy Cuchullins, the most beautiful mountain mass in all Scotland, and never seen to greater advantage than on such a night as this, when the broad moonlight gleams upon the water, making midnight clear as noon. Indeed, in this sweet summer time it can hardly be said that there is any night at all, for often I have seen the last faint flush of the

gloaming, still tinting the west, when the first mysterious shimmer of the dawn began to tinge the eastern skies ;

“ And east and west, without a breath,  
Mixt their dim lights, like Life and Death,  
To broaden into boundless day.”

We were scarcely weary of watching this ever-changing loveliness, when at four in the morning we reached Portree—or rather Portrigh—the King's Port, the harbour having been so named in honour of King Haco, or as some say, only in recent times, in memory of James V., who landed here while on one of his romantic tours of exploration.

As to the island itself, Pennant says its name comes from the Norwegian *Ski*, a mist, and that it was called Eilan Skianach, the cloudy island, by reason of the floating mists and clouds that so constantly rest on its high peaks. Others declare the name of Skye to be derived from “Skianach,” *i. e.* “winged,” because the headlands of Waternish and Trotternish were supposed to give something of the form of wings to the body of the island. It certainly is curious that this, the largest island of Scotland, should be so deeply indented by countless sea-lochs, that no part of it exceeds four miles in distance from the ocean ; indeed very few places are more than two miles from the sea-board.

We found comfortable quarters at the Hotel, and began our life in Skye by such a sleep as I trust you may enjoy this night.

## CHAPTER V.

## THE QUIRAING.

Uig—A Terrible “Spate”—Gaelic Churches—Forms of Worship—Island Homes—Timber—The Famine of 1883—Primitive Agricultural Implements—No Frost—Dr. Johnson—Legend of Castle Ustian—Glens of the Conan and of the Rah—The Quiraing—Monkstadt—Duntulm—Midges—A great Sacramental Gathering.

ONE thing I will say for Skye weather : whatever it does, it does in thorough earnest. I went there intending to remain a week ; but it was four months before I left its hospitable shores, and during all that time we had either drenching rain<sup>1</sup> or broiling heat in about equal parts. On this, our first morning, we awoke late, with a happy consciousness that a steady downpour had commenced, and hour after hour passed without the faintest promise of a break. The laird of Kilmuir had sent his carriage for us at day-break, but wary old John suggested the hope of a break in the clouds towards sunset, when sure enough it cleared, and we found the road in such first-rate order that the fifteen miles to Uig, right

<sup>1</sup> The schoolmaster of Broadford, who has registered the rainfall there for the last ten years, states that one-year it amounted to 98 inches. “ In 1877 there was rain for two hundred days ! ” This fully accounts for the statement of the crofters that “ during the rains, the sea for a quarter of a mile is red with the soil washed off our land, so that in places the remaining soil is barely two inches deep ! ”

across the district of Trotternish, were accomplished with wonderful rapidity.

Uig is a deep bay, in the form of a horse-shoe, the points of which are two rocky headlands rising abruptly from the sea. The Lodge, where so hearty a welcome awaited us, stood at the head of the bay, exactly in the centre, very few feet above the water level, so that at high tide we could throw a pebble from the

#### THE LODGE, UIG.

window into the sea. It was very pleasant on these sweet summer evenings, but its inmates told me that when wild storms raged outside the bay, their wrath, albeit spent in the outer world, still sorely troubled these quiet waters, and lashed the angry surf till it overleapt the low sea-wall, and threw its foam and tangle right up to the porch. On either side of the house a mountain streamlet rushed to the sea with ceaseless babble, so that the pleasant home

virtually stood on a little island, connected with the mainland by bridges.

Alas! that pretty home is now a memory of the past! On a memorable Sunday in October, 1877, a wild storm occurred, and so heavy was the rainfall that both the mountain rivulets were transformed to raging torrents. Madly they rushed down the deep ravine on either side, and swept over the little island. The sea rose in tumultuous waves, and the surging floods met and battled round the house, whence most fortunately the family were absent. Only a faithful old servant was left in charge, no one dreaming of danger.

All night long the raging waters roared, and when day dawned the villagers looked down to where, at sunset, the Big House had stood so securely, but there remained only some traces of a ruin, visible above the waves, which extended inland about a quarter of a mile.<sup>1</sup> When the waters assuaged, the scene was one of ghastly desolation. The trim garden, which had cost its owner so much care and expense, was strewn with large boulders—the bridges were washed away, as were also all those on the road to Portree. The old graveyard, which had stood secure for four hundred years, was washed away, and the bodies lay tossed about in hideous confusion, partially embedded in mud and gravel. Broken coffins, and corpses whom the waves had robbed of their shrouds, lay scattered round the house, where roses and fuschias had bloomed the day before. Many bodies were actually carried away by the current and thrown ashore at Grieshernish,—a distance of fourteen miles. As to the trusty old steward, he must have been carried out to sea, for his body was found cast up by the tide, at a distance of about three miles.

That terrible night is spoken of in Skye as the night of “the Big Flood”—one long to be remembered. But at the time of my visit all was bright and sunny, and happy children played securely in their pleasant home.

On either side of Uig Bay stand the two kirks, the Free Kirk,

<sup>1</sup> All traces of Uig Lodge have now been effaced, and a more important house built on the green shores of beautiful Loch Staffin, at the base of the Quiraing.

which is large and crowded, the Established, which is small and half empty. There is no resident minister, but the representatives of either church at Loch Snizort, distant twelve miles, arrange when possible to come and hold service here on different Sundays, about three times a month. But the distance being considerable, and weather often anything but encouraging, their ministrations are apt to be somewhat irregular.

The service at each is in Gaelic, that combination of savage gutturals being the only language "understanded of the people." But in consideration of the ignorance of about six inhabitants of the Lodge, each church allowed us a special English service every third Sunday. So after the Gaelic service had lasted about two hours we were expected to walk in, the rest of the congregation remaining stationary, though a very small proportion of the men and none of the women understood the English psalm, prayer, and "discoorse," which followed, after which it was our turn to wait patiently while the Gaelic service came to a conclusion ; and though to a southern ear there might be little beauty in the wild tunes to which those old Gaelic Psalms are set, to me they seemed so thoroughly in harmony with the voices of wind and waves around us, that they acquired a charm often lacking in more perfect music.

The tunes are nominally the same as some of those common in the Lowlands, but from the lips of a Gaelic-speaking race, they seem so entirely to assimilate with the language that it would be hard for even a practised ear to recognize their identity. This is partly owing to the fact that they are sung like a kind of litany, each line being first chanted by the precentor alone, and then taken up by the whole congregation. The verse generally begins in a low subdued tone, which gradually swells as it rolls on, then again the voices sink and die away in prolonged wild cadence. Thus each verse is sung in turn, and as the congregation is in no hurry to disperse, and the number of verses is unlimited, the singing seems to roll on endlessly, in a soothing monotony like the sighing of the night wind.

A favourite psalm was the 65th, and its words seem as though written for some such sea-girt land ; well watered, and with corn

land, and rich pastures, and little hills covered with flocks. Many a time it was recalled to my mind when camping in the uttermost parts of the earth, and from some hill temple in the Hîmalayas the wild song of the Paharis (those genuine Highlanders) came floating up to my tent. What words they sung I knew not, doubtless hymns to rivers, and pine forests, and snowy mountains, but the voices and harmonies were identical, and they never failed to carry my thoughts back to the Western Isles.

Altogether there is a wonderful charm in the simplicity of these Highland churches, and even the custom which always strikes a stranger as so singularly unpleasant and unnatural, namely that of standing during public prayer, seems here to acquire a special interest, reminding us of those early days of the primitive Church when the little band of Christians marked the first day of the week by standing at worship in token that on this day they were justified and freed from slavish dread by Christ's resurrection; therefore, while they knelt on the other six days, they "deemed it impious"<sup>1</sup> to bend the knee or to fast on the Lord's own day. The standing attitude was also adopted during Pentecost, but not observed uniformly by all the Churches, for we find the Council of Nice decreeing that "Because there are some who kneel on the Lord's day, and in the days of Pentecost, in order that all things may be

<sup>1</sup> "We deem it impious to fast on the Lord's day, or to pray kneeling."—TERTULLIAN, *De Coronâ Militis*.

"The Church instructs her nurselings to make their prayers standing on the Lord's Day."—BASIL, *De Spiritu Sancto*.

Justin Martyr says:—"Forasmuch as we ought to remember both our fall by sin, and the grace of Christ by which we rise again from our fall, therefore we pray kneeling six days, as a symbol of our fall by sin; but our not kneeling on the Lord's Day, is a symbol of the resurrection, whereby, through the grace of Christ, we are delivered from our sins and from death, that is mortified thereby."—Constantine enacted a law, that on festal days prayers were to be offered by the congregation, not kneeling, but standing.—Hilary speaks of it, as an apostolic practice, neither to fast nor worship kneeling on the Lord's Day, or the fifty days between Easter and Pentecost.—Jerome reckons it among the traditions of the universal Church.—Cassian says of the Egyptian Churches, that from Saturday night to Sunday night, and all the days of Pentecost, they neither kneeled nor fasted.

uniformly performed in every parish or diocese, it seems good to the holy synod that prayers be made to God standing."

So you see that in this matter, and perhaps also in some other respects, the simple worship of the isles comes nearer to the practice of the primitive Christians than does our own more attractive ceremonial. Practically, however, the custom by no means tends to reverence, and it is one which is happily falling into disuse in many Scotch churches.

One picturesque feature of these congregations is that a very large proportion of the older women still continue faithful to their clean white mutches and bright tartan shawls, and some bonnie lassies, too, are not ashamed to make a fold of their plaid act as head-gear, as their mothers did before them, instead of aiming at one invariable type of dress. The poetic snood, which in olden days was the distinguishing mark of every Highland maiden; has unfortunately quite disappeared, its place being usurped by the commonest hair-net; too often by much-beflowered bonnets.

This departure from the simple old head-gear was originally due to an order of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland for awakening sleepers, whose powers of attention were exhausted by the length of the sermons. The Kirk Sessions thereupon prohibited all women from wearing plaids or hoods upon their heads in time of Divine service, that they might not sleep unobserved! These law-givers you perceive were *men*, who could not brook that the women-folk should have such an advantage over them.<sup>1</sup>

They were decidedly selfish, too, in the matter of seats, for until long after the Reformation there were no pews in church save for the big magistrates and landowners. All men of low degree brought their own stools or benches to kirk with them; and the Kirk Sessions of 1597 forbade women to sit on the forms men should

<sup>1</sup> It was not only in Scotland that compulsory attention was thus maintained. In the parish books at Prestwick in Yorkshire, the following entry occurs in A.D. 1736. "It is ordered that 13s. a year, and a new coat every other year, be given to George Grimshaw for his trouble and pains in *waking sleepers in church*, whipping out dogs, keeping children quiet and orderly, and keeping y<sup>e</sup> pulpit and church walls clean."



occupy. "All women must sit together in the kirk, and sit laigh," that is, on the ground! and lest they should profit by this lowly posture, and sleep in peace, a church officer was ordered to go through the kirk with a long pole, to remove the plaids from the heads of all women, whether wives or maids. The same enactment is recorded in the year 1649, and at later intervals.

This regulation as to "sitting laigh" suggests a very different style of church from that which we find now-a-days—perhaps more like those described by Dr. Norman Macleod, who, speaking of a parish of 2000 souls in the Western Highlands, says that in the beginning of the present century, it possessed only two so-called churches. Their dimensions were 40 × 16 feet, and they had neither seats nor bells. He paints the congregation assembling dripping wet, after a long walk across the mountains in heavy rain, and having to huddle together in such a barn as this—perhaps reclining on the earthen floor—perhaps sitting on bunches of heather or stones—but assuredly finding no luxurious comfort as an inducement to sleep!

Doubtless the congregations assembled in these humble churches, were considerably more devout than some composed of finer folk in more orthodox buildings. Such congregations for instance as provoked Bishop Burnet, when he found that "the gallants *would* ogle the ladies of the Court," and that these likewise *would* look about them, instead of attending to what Queen Mary called "his thundering long sermons." He persuaded Queen Anne to allow him to have all the pews in St. James's Church raised so high that his captives could see nothing lower than the pulpit, an example which was shortly after adopted by many of his dry and long-winded brethren, to the lasting disfigurement of our churches!

As to the effects of this legislation on the dresses of our lassies, of course once the plaids were put down by law, it was natural enough that southern fashions should creep in; and the inevitable bonnet with its "gum-flowers" now haunts you at every remotest corner. I think one of the worst points in spreading civilization is the tendency to put away all distinctive national dress, and reduce all raiment to a dull uniformity. And the people in every land, who formerly wore their own accustomed dress with easy grace and

dignity, now ape the stiff fashions of England and France ; and a very unbecoming change it is, in almost every case.

The men of the isles are more faithful than the women, and retain their suit of sonsy dark blue home-spun and broad blue-bonnet. The kilt never seems to have found favour amongst them. Happily the number of black coats and hats is very limited, and you see at a glance that you are surrounded by a race of hard-working fishers and shepherds.

The marvel is to see such families of well brushed-up lads and lassies—so many, and so well grown—and then to look at the tiny bothy whose roof is home, not to these only, but probably to other sons and daughters as well, who have gone to earn their bread on the mainland, or to establish far more prosperous homes in distant lands beyond the seas, but whose hearts are so warm to the old home, and to those that gather round its hearth, that no new ties will ever fill its place. A steadfast people in truth, to whom the home of childhood, how homely soever, will be the golden milestone from which to date each stage of life. And nowhere are the little ones more deeply cared for, and more heartily welcomed. Poor though the hearth may be, that house is reckoned poorest where the quiver is empty, for the Highlanders say that a home without the voices of children is dreary as a farm without sheep or kye.

The bothies are all much alike ; there are generally two rooms : the outer division is the byre for the cattle. It is not cleaned out very often, and is not altogether a pleasant entrance-hall !

Most houses have a double wall of rough unhewn stone, perhaps five or six feet thick, the interstices being crammed with heather and turf. On the *inner side* of this wall rests the roof, which consequently acts as a conduit to convey all the rain that falls, right into the middle of the double wall, which accordingly is always damp. Hence the necessity of sleeping in box-beds, which form a sort of wooden lining for the sleeping corner. Such beds are stuffy, and very suggestive of the probable presence of noxious insects, but the wooden backs, following the angle of the roof, protect the sleepers from some draughts and possible rain-drip, and the bedding looks warm, and as clean as can be expected.

A well-to-do house probably has a window at the end where the family live. It cannot, however, be very efficient in the way of admitting light, since it is merely a hole from twelve to eighteen inches square, and only partially glazed, about half the space being filled up with turf. A misty gleam, however, streams through the opening, by which the smoke ought to escape, but the interior is chiefly dependent for light on the ever-open doorway. To enable the door thus to do double work, it is generally made in two halves, the lower half being frequently closed, while the upper half stands open.

If you approach such a dwelling, a kindly voice will assuredly bid you welcome in the Gaelic tongue (for they "have no English"), and as you stoop to enter the low doorway, you become aware that the peat-reek which saturates the thatch, likewise fills the interior of the house with a dense blue cloud, stinging and choking to unaccustomed eyes and lungs. Then you perceive that half of the house is devoted to the cattle—is, in fact, the byre, and a *very* dirty byre to boot. Here stand the cow and her calf, or maybe a goat or two, kept for milking.

Possibly a rough pony is grazing near, with his fore-legs hobbled to prevent his straying. The pig, should there be one, likewise takes care of itself and roams about outside, for that household companion of the Irish Celt is not a welcome inmate here. Indeed this "gentleman who pays the rent" in the Emerald Isle (or rather who did so in bygone days) is by no means a common possession in these Scottish Isles, where the domestic pig has ever been held in abhorrence well-nigh as deep-seated as among the Hebrews.

A man of the true old type would sooner have starved than have eaten pork or pig's flesh in any form. Now the old prejudice is so far modified that a certain number of "advanced" Celts tolerate the unclean animal as a marketable article; but they are still in a minority, as may be judged from the fact that in the statistics of the Isle of Lewis we find that four thousand families only own one hundred and fifty pigs amongst them all.

Another departure from old tradition is shown by the presence of poultry, the use of which, for food, would have been as repugnant to an ancient Celt as would have been that of a goose or a hare.

Now, however, the "croose tappit hen" is in high favour, and the gude-wife's poultry share with the cat and her kittens, and the handsome Collie dogs, the privilege and honours of the inner chamber. The mother-hen and her chickens seek for crumbs of oat-cake that may have been dropped by the bairns on the earthen floor, while the venerable cock and the other members of his family roost on a well-blackened rafter, rejoicing in the warm smoke.

So also apparently does the kindly-looking old crone in the large clean white cap, bound round her head with a rusty black ribbon, who bends over the peat fire, turning the well-browned oat-cakes on the flat iron girdle which hangs from a heavy chain, suspended from the open chimney, down which streams a ray of light which perchance glances on the blue bonnet and silvery hair of the old grandfather, who sits in the corner quietly knitting his stout blue stockings, and perhaps indulging in a pipe at the same time. A tidy woman, dressed, like all the family, in thick warm homespun, is spinning at her wheel,—the most picturesque of all occupations, and the most soothing of sounds. Possibly the home also owns a loom, in which she can weave the yarn of her own spinning, and so indeed clothe her household in the work of her own hands.

Probably the baby is in a rough wooden cradle at her side, the bigger bairns being away at the school; and wonderful it is how the baby intellect survives the terrible shocks of such rocking as is administered by the maternal foot, working in sympathy with the busy hand. Near the fire are a heap of peats, drying for future use, and perhaps some tarry wool, and a coil of rope, and fishing-nets, proving that here farming and fishing are combined professions.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately all homes are not so well provided. Here are a few extracts from evidence given in the north of Skye.

"There are, on our township, double the number of tenants that I have seen upon it, and the hill pasture was taken from us. We were ordered not to keep a single sheep when the pasture was taken. We were told we would have to dispense with our sheep, or give up our holdings. The sheep were sold at 6s. a head. We were for several years without sheep, after which the proprietor gave us liberty to keep five or six. The few we now have are spoiling our townships for want of pasture. The want of hill grazing is very much felt. It prevents us from keeping some sheep. *The result of the pre-*

A few plates and bowls, spoons and wooden porringers, stand on the rude dresser; a rickety table, a few stools and benches (all probably made of worm-eaten driftwood), complete the furniture, always excepting the *kist*, or seaman's chest, which contains all the Sunday garments of the family, and perhaps, too, the carefully-treasured winding-sheets, prepared by the good-wife for herself and her husband against the day when they will surely be required—a day that is often in their thoughts, not as the end of life, but merely as an incident in the journey that will take them safely to the only Land that is more to be desired than even their own dear Western Isles—the only Home that could be dearer than this, in which they have dwelt so lovingly ever since they can remember, and where most likely their ancestors for many generations have lived and died.

Many of these houses are most picturesque. In old age the thatch acquires a canopy of gold and brown velvety moss, and is

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*vention is that many of us have no better bed-clothes than old bags, formerly used in conveying whelks to Glasgow.*

“Some of the people in our township have no land or sheep, and are so poor that they are glad of a cast-off oilskin. *Sometimes when a poor man gets a good meal-bag he converts it into underclothing.*

“We have spinning-wheels yet. A man who lived near me died at the age of one hundred and five, and he never wore anything but spun clothes made by his wife and daughter. We are now clothed with south country clothing. In this respect things are very different from what they used to be. There are distaffs to be seen now. Those who have hill pasture with sheep upon it yet have clothing made with the wool of their own sheep. This cloth costs not more than 18d. a yard. The same kind of stuff costs 4s. 6d. a yard if bought in the shops.

“The women themselves get the dye stuffs from the rocks. They can get, perhaps, nine or ten different colours of cloth with the dye stuffs they make themselves. They dye with peat soot, lichen, heather tops, and tea, but tea is too dear a commodity to dye much with. When we come back from the south country, we, perhaps, buy a stone of wool to be worked up.

A “merchant” giving his evidence says: “The people are buying less of some sorts of goods, but more meal. They are more deeply in debt to me than ever. I know the people are getting poorer, and that there are families in want of clothing and bed-clothes. The people were in the habit of making their own blankets of their own wool. Many of them have no blankets. *Perhaps they will have bags over them at night.*”

perhaps also adorned with so rich a crop of grass as is positively valuable to the thrifty gude-wife, who, mounting on the roof with her rusty sickle, carefully cuts it all for her cow, should she be so fortunate as to possess one.

The roof is tied on with a perfect net-work of straw or heather ropes, and weighted by large stones, to resist the frightful gusts of wind, which would carry off any ordinary cottage roof. A wealthy man, and one who cares about trifles, may perhaps put up an old herring-barrel to act as a chimney, but, as a general rule, there is none, and the blue smoke finds its way out where it can, or settles on the brown rafters, encrusting the hanging cobwebs with thick peat-reek, which is a much more romantic decoration than our common domestic soot! As years wear on, even oft-repeated patching will not keep the decaying roof water-tight, and in the heavy rains every weak corner is betrayed by a ceaseless drip of diluted soot, establishing black puddles on the earthen floor, or wherever it may chance to fall. When the roof has become so thoroughly saturated with this rich brown grease that a new thatch becomes necessary, the old one is broken up, and becomes very valuable as manure for the little crofts (though some say that soot thus applied merely stimulates, but eventually deteriorates the land).

Owing to the great difficulty in obtaining timber, the real value of the house lies in its rafters; these are for the most part the gift of the sea; sometimes the masts of some poor ship, whose crew lie deep beneath the waters; oftener some grand tree torn up by the mighty tempests that months before raged over the western forests; thence floated by rushing torrents to the deep sea, to become the sport of the waves, and the home of strange creatures, animate and inanimate—barnacles and limpets and many-coloured weeds, which the builder has not thought it worth while to scrape off, so that when, after a few months, they have acquired the general rich brown hue of all within the house, they might very well pass muster as fine old oak carving.

As to the roots and branches, you must not fancy anything so precious is used for firewood; each little chip is turned to some

good account; and the man who secures a good log of driftwood has found a prize indeed. Should he change his home from one village to another, he claims compensation from his successor for the roof timber, which is probably his most valuable possession. Hence when a young couple are courting, their wooing and cooing is accompanied by a most serious search for wood, sticks, straw, and moss, wherewith to build and thatch their future nest.<sup>1</sup>

This lack of timber is one of the great grievances of the lairds, some of whom keep up a ceaseless struggle with nature, striving to make wood grow where she has determined to have none. It is vain to suggest that these bare moors are, at least in this present era, the true character of the country, and that they might as well try to change an aquiline nose into a Roman one. The struggle still goes on, and good gold is sunk in hopeless plantations and great stone walls to protect them from the cutting sea blasts. By dint of these, the young trees are so far protected that they do get a fair start, but alas for the proud day when they attempt to overtop that kindly shelter! Very few days will pass before they are scorched and burnt up, as if by a furnace; and it seems pretty clear that except in a few sheltered nooks, such as Armadale, Dunvegan, and Greshernish, trees will not grow.

This is the more remarkable, as there are traces in different parts of the Hebrides of the comparative abundance of timber in olden days, a fact to which Dean Munro alludes when, writing in A.D. 1594, he speaks of Pabba (now a low grassy island lying off Broadford), as being "full of wodes, and a main shelter for thieves and cut-throats." With respect to more ancient forests, very extensive tracts exist where stems, roots, and branches of large trees, are constantly dug up in the peat moss, remains both of hardwood and

<sup>1</sup> All of which sound rather romantic, in the Robinson Crusoe style. The romance however fades considerably, when we face the unpoetic details of disputes between crofters and factors concerning the gathering of shell-fish,—the proclamations of legal penalties to be enacted against any person found carrying away drift-wood from the shore,—indignant gamekeepers driving off the women who venture to pull heather for thatch or ropes from their own pastures, the number of days' work claimed by the large farmers for permission to cut rushes from the sand-hills, or sea-ware from the rocks.

of pine, the latter being invaluable as a substitute for candles, from the clear light of its resinous wood ; and many a cosy home-group gathers round the ingle neuk, listening to stories of the old days, while one, learned in legends of the past, tells how the Norwegians swept these coasts, and burnt all the old forests, leaving traces of their devastations even to this day, in the charred and blackened timber.

In many instances, fine large trunks have been found under the present sea-level, covered with sea-weed and shells, a striking proof of the gradual encroachments of the ocean in certain districts. It is said that whole tracts of land, till recently under cultivation, have disappeared—or are now so covered with sand, as to be utterly worthless—very much in the same way as a great portion of the “Laich of Moray” was submerged by those fearful inundations at the close of the eleventh century, when, says Boethius, “the lands of Godowine, near the mouth of the Thames, and likewise the land of Moray on the east coast of Scotland, together with many villages, castles, towns, and extensive woods both in England and Scotland, were overwhelmed by the sea, and the labours of men laid waste by the discharge of sand from the sea.”

One curious inference drawn from the class of timber which formerly flourished in these islands is, that a very marvellous change in climate must have taken place in comparatively recent ages. This seems to corroborate certain statistical accounts of the temperature which have been preserved at Kilwinning, in Ayrshire, where, it is affirmed, that so great was the heat in the month of May, that farmers had to leave off ploughing at 8 A.M., and could not resume work before 4 P.M. The same account states that the harvest was finished in August—a very different story from our average nowadays, when a harvest-home in September marks a very satisfactory autumn ; while, in too many instances, a very much later date might be given.

In the Hebrides the cereal crops are always a matter of risk, owing to the extreme probability of prolonged autumnal rains ; and it is only too common to see the crops at the end of the season cut green, and only fit for fodder. In truth, the patience and perseverance of the poor cotters, who continue year after year to toil in such



unprofitable soil, are qualities which may well call forth our wondering admiration.

This particular district of Kilmuir, has the happy distinction of having from time immemorial been known as the best corn-producing portion of the Isle—"The granary of Skye." A hundred years ago Pennant described Uig as "laughing with corn," in contradistinction to other districts which he described as black and pathless bogs. To what extent this superiority may rise I know not, but, in a general way, the crofters on these poor lands never look for a return exceeding three times the quantity planted—many only reap one and a half times what they sow! (whereas on really good soil the farmer may garner twelve times the amount of seed sown).

So poor are the harvests of the land, throughout the Western Isles generally, that they can at best only supplement those of the sea, and these vary greatly from year to year. So essential to these small crofters is this combination of toils by sea and land, that out of the 1780 occupants of land in Skye, there are not more than sixty who are not also fishermen. This double profession is not altogether advantageous, however, as most of the work is crowded into the summer, and one labour interferes with the other. Necessary care for the land detains the men, so that they start late for the fishery; and then, again, they often have to leave the fishing-ground too soon, lest their agricultural work should suffer, and so they miss the finest shoals, which perhaps come just after they have left. Thus great labour is often expended for small profit.

Nevertheless almost every able-bodied man on the Isles counts on making his principal income by the summer herring-fishing, the profits on which (should there be any) afford his only margin of comfort for the year. For it is a rare season in which the sterile soil yields a sufficiency of grain for the requirements of the people, who are always obliged to buy meal, and are dependent on the sale of their fish to enable them to obtain their simple fare of oat-cake and porridge.

Any failure in these supplies at once results in positive distress. There is no cutting down of luxuries,—it is the necessities of life

that fail, and the whole population is at once plunged into absolute want. Never have the Isles experienced a more grievous succession of losses than those of 1882, which have resulted in such widespread misery that those dwelling in its midst, almost despair of coping with it. Indeed it would be difficult to picture a condition of more utter wretchedness than that in which the islanders are now plunged, utterly worsted in the strife with the adverse forces of nature.

The majority do not say much, being well-trained to suffer in silence, and having an amazing power of endurance in bearing troubles which they believe to be ordained by God. No Mahomedan submitting to the irresistible will of Allah can show more fortitude than do these simple Christian folk. "Our people," says one writing on their behalf, "are not over-ready to complain."

Norman MacLeod has recorded how, in a year of terrible destitution in the Highlands, he was present at the first distribution of meal in a remote district. A party of poor old women approached, their clothes patched and repatched, but very clean. They had come from a glen far inland to receive a dole of meal. Never before had they sought alms, and sorely did they shrink from approaching the Committee. At last they deputed one woman to go forward as their representative, and as she advanced they hid their faces in their tattered plaids. When she drew near she could not find words in which to tell her tale, but she bared her right arm, reduced by starvation to a mere skeleton, and stretching it towards the Committee, burst into tears, and her bitter sobs told their own tale of anguish.

That scene might be enacted again this day in a thousand districts in the Highlands and Isles, where nothing approaching to the present distress has been experienced during the last thirty years. It has been rightly said, that there could be no surer test of dire need than that these people should so far conquer their proverbial "Highland pride" as even now to reveal the depths of their poverty.

The tale of woe of 1882 practically commenced in the previous year, when a wild storm destroyed many of the boats. Local sub-

scriptions, however, went far towards covering this loss—and the men went off in high hope to the herring fishery on the East coast. It proved an absolute failure, and at the close of the season, many crews returned home penniless, having had to borrow necessary funds from the fish-curers. Later in the season, the ling fishery, to which they looked for the recovery of some of their losses, proved an absolute blank. Thus the islanders were left entirely dependent on the return of their scanty crops. But here again they found that they had spent their strength for nought, and all their toil had been in vain.

First the potato crop proved an utter failure. As the summer wore on, the blackening shaws grievously suggested the approach of the too familiar blight. Even where the best seed had been planted in the best soil, the result was alike disheartening. In place of large mealy potatoes, the luckless planters gathered a small crop of worthless watery roots, smaller than walnuts. One man tells how he has only raised five barrels from the very same ground which generally yields thirty barrels. Another planted eight and a half barrels of seed potatoes and only raised two and a half. Others proved their crops so hopeless, that it was literally not worth the exertion of turning the ground to seek for the few half-diseased roots that might have been obtained.

Mr. Mackay, Chamberlain for Lewis, stated that in one parish he set two men to dig, in order to raise as many potatoes as possible, and all they were able to get, after working from ten in the morning till four o'clock in the afternoon, was about a basketful.

The testimony of the clergy writing from the neighbourhood of Stornaway, and from the district of Barvas, was heart-rending. They told of the sick and suffering, of feeble women and aged men who, in the extremity of illness, possessed *only a few small diseased potatoes*. They told of houses in which parents watched tenderly by dying children, but their bitter lamentations were not for the dying, but for the living children who were well-nigh starving. The teachers in the schools state that a large proportion of children in attendance, many of whom have travelled long distances from their homes, have actually done so without a morning meal of any sort. And they

themselves have little or nothing to give. The parish ministers say truly that these are people who are not inclined to cry out for a small matter—nothing short of extreme need would have induced them to apply for aid. But what can men do in the face of starvation?

As long as there was the prospect of a tolerable grain-crop, they kept up a brave heart—though well aware how scanty must be the supply, with neither potatoes nor herring to look to. Still, the harvest promised fair, and ripened so well that by the end of September all was cut, and ready for carrying. But on the night of the 1st October a terrible gale swept over the land, to the utter destruction of both grain and hay crops. The small stooks still stood ungarnered in the fields, all ready for stacking, when the tremendous storm burst upon the unsheltered shores, and carried them away as though they had been so many feathers. Some were carried miles inland, and scattered over the hill-sides; some were scattered along the sea-beach, others carried far out to sea.

When the fury of the gale subsided, all that remained of this—the last resource of the people—the produce of their year's toil—was some widely-scattered damaged straw, with all the grain beaten out of it. One man reports that on the morning of the gale he owned three hundred stooks of barley; of these, he was only able to save thirty. Another, who is generally able to make seven bolls of barley-meal, has this year failed to make one pound.

From every corner of the Isles, comes the same tale of distress, only varying a little in degree. Here is the report of a fairly typical village in the parish of Duirinish, in Skye. It contains thirty-seven houses, with a population of 189 persons. From this village about sixty men went to the herring fishing on the East coast, but the whole result was only twenty-one barrels, worth about £60, to be divided among the whole community—a poor reward for the long and arduous toil involved.

The crofters of this township planted 171 bolls of potatoes, but in the autumn they lifted only 215 bolls. In seed time they sowed 156 bolls of oats, but in the harvest they garnered only 136! So that on the grain crop all their toil resulted in dead loss.

The townships own twenty-three cows. In the spring of 1883

these were yielding only eleven quarts of milk a day—not a very abundant supply for 189 porridge-consuming men, women, and children!

Their sole remaining source of revenue was from their hens, which yielded an average of sixty-two eggs per diem.

To add to the wretchedness of their destitution, they had to endure the bitter cold of a prolonged winter, beside a dreary, almost fireless hearth, for the long summer rains which reduced the hay to a sodden pulp, prevented the newly-cut peats from drying. So they remained like heavy wet bricks, piled on the peat moss, and there in some districts they still lay, saturated,—when the wild October gale came and whirled them back into the peat-bogs whence they had been cut with so much labour.

One glimmer of hope remained in the prospect of the winter haddock-fishing, which in some years proves fairly lucrative. Last year, however, it proved an absolute failure, and for the third time in one year, the poor disheartened fellows returned to their sad homes, with empty boats, to face long months, during which no alleviation could be hoped for. So in the spring of 1883, many thousands of persons, in every part of the North-western Islands and Highlands, stood in *absolute need of everything*,—dependent on the charity of the more fortunate dwellers on the mainland for actual daily bread, as well as for seed-corn and seed-potatoes for the future.

This is no story of want resulting from improvidence, for the people are careful and frugal, and (though very slow in their movements, and occasionally making matters worse than they need be, by procrastination, or by the listlessness born of vainly fighting against circumstances, to say nothing of the depression produced by constant under-feeding) it is certainly unjust to call them idle—many are hard-working. “A patient, industrious, God-fearing people” is the description given of them by those who know them best; and their life in most prosperous times would seem to us to be one of exceeding hardship—a life in which luxury is an altogether unknown term, and a bare subsistence is hardly wrung, by ceaseless toil, from the unfertile land and stormy waves.

Even in what is called a "good year, when the fishing has been successful, and the grain and potato crops have been safely garnered—when the harvest of the sea, and of the land, have alike been above the average—the islanders can barely make a living and pay their rents; yet, being generous and warm-hearted, they contrive so to divide their pittance, as to provide meal and potatoes for the widows and orphans, and such other members of the community as have none to work for them. No light undertaking, when we consider that in one parish alone, which may be accepted as a fair type of others, it has been calculated that out of a population of 5000 persons, 1400 may be classed as poor relations, living by sufferance on the tiny land-lots of their friends, and in a great measure supported by them.

Of course the distress in many districts has been intensified by this lamentable system of over-crowding, but these poor islanders, with their deeply-rooted love of home, are slow to learn the lesson of the bees, and to send off voluntary swarms to commence new colonies in unpeopled regions. It has required the pressure of the oft-repeated years of famine, and strong persuasion to boot, in order to establish those very Highland communities in various parts of the world, where, to this day, the second and third generations of flourishing colonists, speak no language but Gaelic, and will call no place by the sacred name of "home" save those far-distant Isles, which their own eyes have never beheld—but to which their hearts turn with such intensity of patriotic love. To this day, Wilson's words express the true feeling of thousands of these prosperous exiles.

"From the dim shieling on the misty island,  
Mountains divide us, and a world of seas,  
But still our hearts are true—our hearts are Highland,  
And we, in dreams, behold the Hebrides!"

Doubtless the poetic love of nature, and leal patriotism, so characteristic of the Celt, is considerably strengthened by the general use of the Gaelic language, which, while it cuts off these people from general communication with the outer world, keeps in habitual use a phraseology peculiar to themselves, full of images drawn from the world of nature.

At the present moment, though so great a multitude of Scotland's sons have emigrated to all parts of the world (there to form Gaelic colonies in which no other tongue is spoken), there remain in the four counties of Sutherland, Ross (which includes Cromarty), Inverness, and Argyle, upwards of *one hundred and eighty-four thousand persons who habitually use the Gaelic language.*

Out of a total population of 3,735,573, it is found that 231,594 of our Scottish people still use the old Celtic tongue. Of these 151,244 represent all parts of the Highlands, while the remaining 80,350 abide in the Western Isles, in most of which English is still an almost unknown tongue.<sup>1</sup> This in itself explains one great secret of the aversion felt by the islanders to going forth to seek work on the mainland, where they are well aware that they will have to fight life's battle amongst men who are to them a foreign race, and to whom their tongue is an uncouth, incomprehensible jargon.

It is somewhat remarkable, by the way, to learn that at five-sixths of the two hundred Board-Schools, attended by the twenty thousand Gaelic-speaking children, there is actually no provision for teaching them to read their own language, nor does there appear to be any reasonable prospect of such teaching being provided. Even in the remaining one-sixth the provision is very inadequate. Under these circumstances it is difficult to understand what advantage the children are to derive from compulsory school attendance, unless the art of reading English like parrots be accounted sufficient. For

<sup>1</sup> It may surprise some to learn that according to the census for 1881 there are still in Scotland so large a number of persons whose natural language is Gaelic, and of whom many thousands can understand no other language. These, with the exception of 18,960, all inhabit the northern part of Scotland and the Western Isles.

So remarkable is the complete difference of race between the inhabitants of the Hebrides, and those of our northern groups, that in the Shetland Isles only twelve persons, and in Orkney only thirty-six, are found who can speak Gaelic. These groups were entirely colonized by Norwegians, and their present language is ordinary Scotch, with a Quaker-like use of "thou" instead of "you."

In Ireland 1,000,000 persons understand Erse, and 163,000 cannot speak English!

all instruction given in such form as they can understand, they are dependent on the voluntary exertions of the Gaelic School Society.

Doubtless the School Board authorities suppose that by ignoring Gaelic in school teaching, a useful blow may be struck at its existence, and the time hastened when it shall cease to be a distinctive language.<sup>1</sup> Little do such judges know of its amazing hold on the love of the people—such a hold that even in far countries to which Gaelic-speaking Islanders and Highlanders drifted two or three generations back, not a word of English is spoken to this day; indeed so carefully have the children been taught their mother tongue in its purity, that the descendants of Skye men, Harris men, or men of Argyle, can still recognize one another by the peculiarities of dialect, only to be detected by their own keen ears.

I know of at least one such village in the province of Auckland in New Zealand, and am told that many such exist in the Southern Isle. Far in all parts of the wilds of British North America such

<sup>1</sup> With reference to the School Board providing only English teachers for Gaelic-speaking children, in the course of evidence given before the Royal Commission in the Lews, one of the delegates stated that “their objection to the present mode of education was that the old book that God Almighty had given them for their salvation was just treated as a by-play at skip—that was, just a slap and be done with it. The children did not get half enough of religious instruction in the schools.”

*Q.*—Do they learn the Shorter Catechism? *A.*—Ay; the easy bits at the beginning, but nothing else.

*Q.*—Do they learn the Bible in Gaelic? *A.*—Not a word but English, which they don't understand.

John Munro, twenty-three, teacher of the Public School, Ness, said he had been two and a half years in his present situation. He was a native of Ross-shire, and could understand Gaelic better than he could speak it. He possessed sufficient of it to make it useful to him in teaching. The children were taught in English, and the Shorter Catechism was also taught in English.

*Q.*—Do you think that in most cases the religious instruction and the teaching of the Shorter Catechism are reasonably understood, or were they learnt by rote? *A.*—In most cases it was learnt by rote.

*Q.*—Was the religious instruction as well understood as it could be in an ordinary school? *A.*—That could not be quite the case, because they had not the same command of the English language.



colonies are scattered. Canada has no population more intensely loyal than her true Highlanders, all born on her shores, and who probably have never left them, but are nevertheless whole-hearted Scotchmen, keeping up all old customs, singing the old Gaelic songs in the old style, and ready to welcome with ecstatic delight the stranger who can accost them in their mother-tongue, thereby proving it to be his own, for it is a language that few have been able to acquire, save those to whom its accents come as a birthright.

One of the principal colonies of Gaelic-speaking Canadians is that of Stornoway, a flourishing town, so named in memory of the barren shores of Lewis. Here three thousand Highlanders, strong in ancestral tradition, are ready to welcome fresh colonists from the old land, for whose behoof large tracts of land have been laid out in lots of a hundred acres, offered for sale at £1 per acre, payable in the course of ten years. On each of these lots ten acres have already been cleared and are ready for crops; the remaining ninety acres are still in forest, and furnish abundant timber for the lumberer.

Perhaps the strangest instance of the survival of the Gaelic tongue and Highland sympathy is to be found in the American State of South Carolina, where we should have supposed that the American nationality, which swallows up all others, assimilating them to itself, would assuredly have likewise absorbed the Celtic colonists. But here, on the contrary, so strongly has the line of demarcation been kept up for upwards of a century, that to this day there are about fifteen Presbyterian churches, filled by congregations born in South Carolina, and who, understanding no language save Gaelic, are instructed solely by Gaelic pastors born in the colony. Every circumstance of life has altered—independence and comparative wealth have taken the place of the poverty which drove their fathers from their loved Isles or Highlands, yet the new country in which they have found these blessings has but a secondary place in their love, for they are still Highlanders at heart, and they still speak of the moorland, which their own eyes have never seen, as—Home.

In the present instance, the wide-spread distress of so many

thousands of innocent sufferers has most unfortunately been made the occasion of such virulent contests, between the advocates of compulsory emigration, and those who believe that by a new division of farms and pasture-lands, the north-country could feed all her hardy sons, and retain their strength in her own service,—that party-strife has waxed hot on this battle-field, and the various Relief Committees complain bitterly that the tide of charity has been checked, and that they are consequently left without the necessary funds to relieve pressing cases of want ; so, while the few are battling over political questions, the many are compelled to endure extreme want in silence and despair.

In the year of my visit to the Isles, there was happily no such time of trial—all was going on well—the season was favourable—the pastures abundant—the crops ripening fairly under the influence of an unusual predominance of sunshine.

To us (as to all visitors from the mainland), the primitive agricultural implements in common use, were objects of wonder and of interest, and many a time we halted to watch the patient toilers at their slow and weary work. The quaintest of their tools is the Caschrom or wooden plough, consisting of a bent handle four or five feet long, to which is attached a piece of wood like a long pointed foot shod with iron ; this is propelled by the ploughman's own foot. Sometimes it is made more like a spade, which digs into the ground, instead of scratching it. And with this curious tool, the little fields or small crofts are worked. The only marvel is that it should act at all, but the soil is so light that after rains which would convert most places into morasses, half an hour's sun makes the dust fly, and in order to enrich it, we see the people dig sea-weed into the earth as a manure—sea-weed which they must first purchase the right to collect, and then carry on their backs in wicker baskets, for perhaps several miles up hill.<sup>1</sup> This perpetual use of sea-ware

<sup>1</sup> One man having told the Royal Commission how, on the establishment of large sheep farms, he was first forbidden any longer to keep sheep, added—“ We were next forbidden to keep horses, and had to do their work by carrying burdens on our backs. During the last year I have put on my land 200 creels of sea-weed, all which I have had to carry myself. In ascending from the shore to our township, the brae is so steep that we have to hold on by our

does not seem to be altogether advantageous, as it is said to destroy the tenacity of the soil, and renders it more liable to be washed away by every falling rain. It is, however, a necessary evil, the crofts being now so small, that it is impossible for these very poor farmers ever to let a field lie fallow, so that the land, having been made to yield the same crops for fifty or sixty years without any rotation, is naturally exhausted, and becomes less productive year by year.

When the fields are thus ploughed by hand, a couple of lassies will yoke themselves to the harrow, and work bravely for hours, dragging it to and fro, over the rough ground. It is a rough and ready harrow, on which are laid branches of furze, heavily weighted with stones. Such work must be tolerably exhausting, yet, when evening comes, these lassies (who do not look specially robust) must, perhaps, "travel" eight or nine miles across the hills, carrying on their back some heavy box just brought by the steamer, or else a sack of potatoes, or a creel of peats.

It is a hard life, of never-ending and ill-requited toil, and the struggle for existence becomes harder year by year, as the land becomes more impoverished by the effort to yield the self-same crops for generation after generation,—the soil ever deteriorating, and the mouths to be fed ever increasing in number. Many a pang of hunger and cold and weariness have these men and women endured, without a murmur, as beseems thoroughbred Islesmen and Highlanders; who would have fallen low indeed in their own eyes, should they betray symptoms of any such weakness.

They are real gentlemen in their way, with delicate inborn tact, and all the naturally courteous instincts of good breeding; and,

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hands." Another says: "We feel it to be a great grievance that we are prevented by the smallness of our crofts from keeping a horse to help us with the tillage, as it is laborious and even degrading for women and men to have to carry all manure and sea-ware on our backs. My son and myself worked all last winter, carrying soil from the knolls and spreading it on the land." A third states: "I put out work on my croft and tried to improve it, and my reward was that my rent was raised 5s. in the £1. I did no more for it. I had worked like a horse, going four miles for mud for soil."

moreover, with a keen perception of all that marks true breeding in others ; as well as the pride born of self-respect. This is the key to that which does so puzzle Englishmen, in the perfectly familiar intercourse existing between class and class, yet never breeding contempt ; every detail connected with the laird's kith and kin, having ever been treated by the people as a matter of personal interest.

Notwithstanding the sparks of antagonism between class and class, which have recently been so carefully kindled, and fostered, by party agitators, the deep-seated feeling of real allegiance to the old blood—the hereditary owners of the soil—happily still exists, though in too many cases grievously weakened by the lack of personal intercourse, and by the slowly realized conviction that the pecuniary value of estates has, in some instances, been more considered than the interests of those dwelling thereon. In other cases the Sassenach and his gold have the sway, and hold the broad lands, while the descendants of the old stock seek their fortunes in far countries ; and it can scarcely be supposed that the affection of the people can be bought with the land.

There is one advantage possessed by the Isles, which at a first glance we could scarcely expect, namely, the unusual mildness of their climate. Heavy as is the rainfall, they enjoy a singular immunity from biting frosts—a peculiarity which attracted our attention in Cantyre, and which is said to be especially true of the remote Isle of St. Kilda, which is more fully subject to the warm currents of the Gulf Stream.

Nevertheless, strange things sometimes drift ashore, which tell rather of having floated down from chilling northern latitudes. Sometimes large fragments of ice, and once a great walrus found its way hither, having probably sailed along unsuspectingly on some detached fragment of his iceberg. His head is still preserved, as that of so rare a guest deserved to be.

Speaking of rare guests, you will not travel far in Skye before hearing anecdotes of the pompous Dr. Johnson and his little friend "Bozzy." Almost the first drive we were taken from Uig was to see Kingsburgh House, as being the place where Flora Macdonald

entertained them. To us it had far more interest as being that in which, many years before, in the days of her youth and beauty, she and her princely maid, Betty Burke, had found shelter and safety. But we heard so many legends of Prince Charlie's hair-breadth escapes among these islands, that I will tell you what we gathered on that subject in a more connected form.

I do not mean to say that we withheld our tribute of admiration from the brave old man, the City-bred philosopher, who, at the age of sixty-four, forsook the luxury of London clubs, and, though suffering from his sight, and heavy alike from disease and from his naturally unwieldy size, yet determined to behold with his own eyes those barren Hebrides, which had appeared to him in far-away visions, grey and dreamy, as he sat by his comfortable board in Fleet Street.

So, like a true pilgrim, he started on that, then difficult, journey to Iona, and thence to Isles further still, tossing about on stormy nights in an open sailing-boat; riding rough Highland ponies, or even trudging wearily on tired feet over moor and mountain, through scenery that to him seemed only grim and savage. Nothing daunted by storms and discomforts, he pursued his way, seeking for Ossian and for trees. Fancy a man with no Gaelic hoping to find Ossian! He tested his drinking capacity against that of seasoned whisky-loving lairds, and tried to deepen the impression he had made on their women-folk, by keepsakes of such light literature as odd volumes of arithmetic! The poor man even tried to get up a due appreciation of the pipes by standing with his ear close to the drone, enduring silent martyrdom without wincing, thinking thereby to test his fine ear for music!

How little he or his entertainers could have foreseen how each little detail of their intercourse was destined to become historical, thanks to the ever ready note-book of his faithful chronicler!

Between Kingsburgh and Uig there is an old ruin on a cliff overhanging the sea, a pleasant spot in which to bask away the sunny hours—the blue Cuchullins making a lovely background to the grey walls. This Castle Ustian (or Hugh's Castle) was built in the time of James VI. by Hugh Macdonald, as a place of refuge. It had no

windows, or any means of access, except a small door high in the wall, to which its master climbed by a ladder, which he then pulled up after him ; and could rest tolerably secure as long as his provisions lasted.

Being next of kin to Donald Gorm Mor, the chief, he seems to have been weary of waiting for dead men's shoes ; and, having induced some of his neighbours to form a conspiracy against his uncle, they formally drew up a bond, which they all signed. This compact was left in the hands of one, Macleod. It seems that this man had previously received a bond from a cattle-dealer, for monies due to him, and on this being reclaimed, Macleod, who could neither write nor read, gave the drover the wrong document, which quickly found its way to the chief. The latter generously determined to meet this villiany with chivalrous goodness, and giving a public feast, invited all these traitors, who duly appeared. He then publicly produced the compact ; confronted them with their own signatures, and forgave them.

Hugh was solemnly sworn to fidelity along with the others, but being little touched by his uncle's forgiveness, he soon embarked in a new plot, and the story runs, that having written two letters, one to the chief in terms of deepest penitence, and the other to a co-traitor, devising fresh means for his assassination, he folded both letters, and addressed each to the other correspondent. His villiany being thus a second time detected, his uncle determined to secure his own safety, and before Hugh was conscious of his blunder, he was invited to return to the house of his chief, when he was seized and cast into a dark and noisome dungeon, where he was left for many hours without tasting food. When ravenous with hunger, an abundant meal of salt meat was lowered to him. And after awhile, when half mad from raging thirst, a cup followed. But it was the cup of Tantalus—empty, and only mocked his agony. After this no human step drew near again, and he was left to perish miserably in solitude, darkness, and unutterable anguish.

There is no lack of variety in the drives about Kilmuir, and the good roads in every direction show the wish of the proprietor to open up the country. The most beautiful, is one along the sea-







coast, passing above the rock needle, known as "The old man of Scudaboro," who rises from the sea, and whether in tempest or in calm, keeps ceaseless watch, though the human garrison have for many a long century forsaken their vitrified fort, traces of which you may still note on the green hill-top. Beyond rises the red headland of Idrigal, one of the points of Uig Bay.

A short distance further comes Monkstadt, so called from an old monastery, of which some ruins can still be traced, on what was once an islet in the lake close by. Probably it furnished a convenient quarry for the modern farm-house, to which various Jacobite legends are attached, whereof more anon. The loch has been partially drained, and now yields rich meadow hay, while the land all along the coast is unusually fertile. The grain crops are generally good, and the pasture-lands green and smiling, which indeed is the most striking characteristic of this very verdant part of Skye, and doubtless led to its selection as the site of the monastery.

Passing onward along the coast, with the sea on one hand, and on the other a confused wall of broken-down cliff and great rocks, we come to the ruins of old Duntulm Castle, the Castle of the Grassy Hillock, one of the finest holdings of the old Lords of the Isles, and indeed their original home, built on the site of an old Dun, or fortress of the Vikings, the Scandinavian pirate chiefs who held sway on these Isles, ere the coming of the conquering Norsemen. There are no less than six old Danish Duns in this one parish of Kilmuir.

Like all this coast, Duntulm is now the property of the Laird of Kilmuir, and the modern house and broad pastures are rented by one of those wealthy farmers, whose names are as familiar at the cattle shows of the mainland as they are in the Isles. The old castle has been uninhabited since 1715, and is now quite a ruin, and like all the ancient dwellings, it conveys a wonderful idea of discomfort, with tiny rooms in the thickness of the wall, and little space for luxury in such crowded quarters.

Whether the ladies wrought tapestry for their walls I know not; but servants, called rush-bearers, were kept on purpose to strew the floors every morning with fresh rushes. This in due time led to

the invention of rush or grass matting, and so to the use of other materials for carpeting.

I suppose it was only in extra luxurious houses that rushes were thus strewn, for even when Dr. Johnson visited the Highlands, he found only clay floors in some of the best houses. He describes one to which he was welcomed, and, after an abundant supper, was conducted to a bedroom where "an elegant bed, spread with fine sheets, stood on the cold earth, which a long course of rain had softened to a puddle." Not noticing this at first, he undressed and found his feet in the mire !

The inhabitants of Duntulm Castle, commanded a grand sea-view, overlooking the channel of the Minch, the rocky Shiant Isles, and those of Uist, Harris, and Lewis ; while its site on perpendicular basalt cliffs, rising from the sea, proved a very grand natural fortification.

If we continue our drive along the same wild and beautiful road, it will take us round the foot of the Quiraing, by the green hills of Flodigarry, to the inn at Loch Staffin ; thence two miles of slow ascent and infinite beauty bring us to the brow of the hill, whence we first caught sight of the wonderful Rock Wilderness.

I have sometimes sat at this spot throughout the beautiful long day without seeing a living creature save a group of picturesque lassies, in the usual short petticoat and white bed-gown, with bare feet and bright scarlet or white handkerchief on their glossy hair, half-hidden by the huge bundle of heather, which they would have to carry six or eight miles, that the men might rethatch their bothies. Though their usual habit is to dart off the road, and hide, on the approach of any gentry, they would rest a while near me, to watch the lady "making maps," and laugh and chatter to me in Gaelic, of which I knew about three words.

One of these—i. e. *meaniehulagan*, the small flies, alias midges—was a sure bond of sympathy, for these little miscreants are the very torture of life in Skye. You have only to brush over the heather, and even if by any accident they were at rest, up they start in ravenous armed myriads, making work utterly impossible, till at last, with fevered blood, and face and hands literally swollen by

their attacks, you probably have to leave the spot to which you had attained with such toil and trouble, and make for home or the sea-shore as fast as ever you can. Never before have I been filled with so righteous a personal detestation to Beelzebub, the god of flies! Never have I so devoutly sympathized with those old Greeks, who considered the office of Fly-disperser to be work enough and to spare for one of their gods, and told him off accordingly!<sup>1</sup> We tried every conceivable mixture to drive them away, and even sent to a London physician for special antidotes for our tormentors, but all prescriptions failed, and we found that the only thing approaching to relief was always to carry a small bottle of essential oil of

#### THE QUIRAING AND BASALTIC COAST.

lavender, with which to rub our face and hands. It dries so rapidly that there is no danger to an artist of greasing his paper, and the scent, which to human beings is rather pleasant, seems unendurable to the midges. After we made this discovery, every sportsman carried a tiny phial, as the best defensive ammunition.

We had not far to go, in search of natural beauty. I have already alluded to the two streams, which enter the sea on either side of the site whereon stood the hospitable home, in which we spent such pleasant summer days. One of these is the Conan—a clear, cool

<sup>1</sup> Zeus Apomyios or Myiagros, who was worshipped as the Disperser of flies.

stream, laughing and sparkling in the sun-light, or dreaming in quiet pools under the green shade of ferns which grow in every cleft of the black mossy rock; it flows down a narrow glen, where the yellow broom, shaken by the breeze, drops in golden blossoms into the brown water, startling the speckled trout that lie on the white gravel below, and making them dart up-stream, to hide among the pebbles, over which the water frets and ripples, ere it speeds on its sea-ward way.

For me, this quiet little glen had a never-failing charm, for each time I explored it, some new interest revealed itself. Sometimes I took up a post of observation near an overhanging ledge of rock, from beneath whose shelter there presently swam out a motherly old wild duck with all her brood—darling little balls of brown and yellow fluff, with eyes like black diamonds—rejoicing in their young lives. At another time, a water-ouzel would dive from among the sedges right into the stream, in pursuit of some delectable beetle; or the ring-ouzel would fly down from his home among the heathery cliffs, to a flat granite rock, to drink and lift up his head to the sun as if giving thanks, and then drink again. Sometimes came the lovely black and white Oyster Catchers, with scarlet bills and legs (Sea-Pyats, *i. e.* Sea-Magpies, we call them, when they make their spring home on the gravelly banks of the rushing Spey), and the air rang with their wild cries.

As I wandered up this bonnie burnside, I came upon rich masses of honeysuckle, trailing up the rocks, and hanging down to the water's edge. And hidden in this sweet tangle of whispering leaves and blossoms, were dainty homes in the woodbine, where young birds chirped the livelong day.

To all lovers of wild flowers, these islands must have an especial charm, for their infinite variety and beauty. There are rare flowers for collectors, but I confess I care more for those I have known from childhood, and the sweet braeside is all covered with these. The delicate purple rock geranium and the white *Stellaria* (the Star of Bethlehem) grow thickest among "the moist and reedy grass" in these shady nooks; and Our Lady's Mantle holds its large dew-drop in each leafy cup.

The fragrant Bog-Myrtle (or rather, Sweet Gale), lies in green patches, scenting the air; while over every heather tuft, the gossamer spider has spun its delicate web, and one marvels how so frail a tissue can support the thousand diamond-like dew-drops, which glisten and sparkle all over it. The Canna grass or Bog Cotton also waves its soft downy plumes, seeming to sprinkle a shower of snow above the dark peat-moss, an emblem dear to many an old Scotch ballad-writer.

The Grass of Parnassus is here in abundance, but you must go to drier banks to find the loveliest flower of all, the pure white star which crowns that delicate slender stem, from which grows a second star of green leaves, two or three inches below the blossom. I only know it as the "*Trientalis Europæa*,"—far too fine a name for so graceful and delicate a blossom.

When we reach the Falls of the Conan, where the merry waters dash noisily over the dark rock, we turn aside into a quiet "dell without a name," where a multitude of conical fairy hillocks rise on every side of us, like innumerable tumuli of some giant race of bygone days. They are all exactly alike in shape, only differing in size; all clothed with short grass, and worn into countless concentric rings, which I fancy must be sheep-walks, though they look like water-marks, or indeed like human handiwork, like the steps of the Pyramids on a small scale. The only other place where I am aware of the existence of a similar formation is near Loch Torridon, where, in a valley known in Gaelic as that of the thousand hills, the same green knolls rise in endless groups round a central loch.

The highest of these Skye hillocks, is crowned by a precipitous rock, called Castle Ewan, so marvellously resembling a fortified castle, that it is difficult to believe some ghostly masons have not been at work. The hillocks are essentially grassy, "with daisies powdered o'er" as old Chaucer says, but in the little valleys between them, there is the same wealth of wild flowers in endless variety. Here are carpets of purple and white Orchis, and golden Globe flowers, veiled by the lace-like blossoms of wild Parsley; while the honeyed fragrance of the pink Bog-Heather attracts a humming swarm of bees. The delicate blue butterflies hover like floating

harebells over the large pearly-white Gowan, with the golden heart—"the Wishing-Flower" the children call it, when they test their little loves by its fortune-telling leaves.

You will hardly find a pleasanter resting-place than one of these grassy knolls, where you can lie in peace and listen to nature's stillness—"the many-mingled sounds of earth, which men call silence,"—the sounds of the moorlands, the shiver and rustle of grasses, ferns and tall iris-leaves bending before the faint breeze; and the hum of insect life, with that ceaseless undertone of murmuring sea and rivulet, alike invisible. Presently, from their burrow under the fairy hillock, come a family of young rabbits—little, soft, coaxy things—playing all manner of merry antics; springing and leaping like merry kittens, and nibbling at the rich grasses. One sits close to us,

"Fondling its poor harmless face,"

while the others scamper off to a feast of Dandelion, and, as they touch the feathery tufts of silken down, the whole air is filled with fluffy parachutes, wafted about with every breath; and thistle-down too is floating in soft white clouds.

Do you know how the Thistle came to be chosen as the emblem of Scotland? The old tradition is, that when a Scottish garrison was in danger of being surprised by a Danish foe, a bare-footed Dane, creeping along in the darkness of night, trod on the sharp prickles of a thistle, and, yelling with the shock of sudden pain, aroused the drowsy sentinel; and the garrison thus saved, adopted the emblem and motto which afterwards became that of the nation.

Turning homeward from this happy valley, a light curl of blue smoke betrays a lonely sheiling, more picturesque than cosy, I fear. It is built as a lean-to against a great boulder of rock, the honey-suckle has clambered over the heather roof; outside it is a study for a painter, but within, it is dark and dingy, and thick with the rich brown peat-reek of ages. It does own a chimney, through which we see more of the blue sky than through the tiny window; and when our blinded eyes can distinguish anything, a ray of light (from the chimney) gleaming athwart the blue haze reveals a hand-

some cat with her kittens playing near two nice old wives—"caillachs," the Gaelic folk would say—who sit spinning in the corner. They are very deaf, and "have no English," so our friendship begins and ends with a smile and a grip from a kindly old hand that has done plenty of good work in its day. Probably they offer us a hot oat-cake, for the poorest hut would fain show hospitality to a stranger.

The other stream which flows into Uig Bay is the Rah, whose chief attraction is a very picturesque waterfall—no great thing on a dry day, but after a good night's rain, when there is something of a spate, and it comes roaring, rushing, and tumbling, as if from the blue sky, down between the black cliffs where the Ravens build, into a deep basin, whence it boils over and makes a second fall, and then swirls and bubbles round the great boulders of grey rock, whose golden lichens and brown mosses gleam through the spray—then, I think, it is a thing of beauty, and worth pausing a few moments to see, from some spot nearer than the high-road, along which the tourists hurry to Quiraing; *that* being the thing to do; and to be done, like all sight-seeing, as quickly as possible.

We narrowly escaped bequeathing to the spot a legend of our own. For one morning, while I was quietly painting, and my brother scrambling about the rocks overhead, suddenly *something* flashed past me, and I looked up just in time to see him disappear in the black water below. As we knew nothing of its depth, my first terror was that he would probably strike his head upon a rock, and it was with a sense of thankful relief that, long before I could clamber down from my own somewhat dangerous perch, I saw a white face rise, and in a few moments more, he managed to scramble out, with no worse hurt than a bruised knee.

A few days later we found our way to the Quiraing, which afterwards became a very favourite haunt. It is a stupendous mass of rock (amygdaloidal trap, which is a black rock speckled with white), the grassy hill ending abruptly in a precipitous rock face, whence green banks slope down to the sea. Its general form, and that of its neighbour, "The Storr Rock," is much the same as Salisbury Crags, which must be familiar to every one who has passed

through Edinburgh. The Storr has one gigantic detached needle about 165 feet in height, which stands out clear against the sky like a huge horn, quite separate from the cliff, and visible for many miles on either side.



#### THE NEEDLE. QUIRAING.

The Quiraing, in addition to one giant needle, has a chaotic wilderness of huge detached masses of rock of every conceivable form. These are striking enough, even when seen in the bright sunshine; but after a rainy night, when fleecy white mists curl and







wreathe themselves, like spirit drapery, round each weird form, and vapours steam up from the grass at your very feet till you hardly know where you stand, and every object is magnified tenfold, the feeling of awe and mystery becomes almost overpowering.

Sometimes a fantastic white shroud suddenly hides the whole scene, and you see nothing but the grass and rushes under foot. Then a rift in the cloud shows you the blue sea, lying in the calm sunlight far below, dotted with islands, and perhaps the white sail of a yacht. Suddenly a fairy hand draws back the curtain, and close to you is a rock, like a huge lion couchant, and behind it, a tall pillar, with a kneeling figure, which reminds one of St. Simon Stylites. Another moment, and these have disappeared; but in their place three giant figures, with curled wigs and flowing robes, have slowly emerged from the mist. They are unmistakably a King and Queen, and the Lord Chancellor; who, however, stands uncourteously *dos à dos* to his sovereign, but facing a solemn and shadowy old Druid priest, who sits gravely guarding his Rock Sanctuary.

These, and a hundred more, are among the quaint rock forms that jut up from that wonderful confusion like figures in a dream, suggesting the work of some antediluvian wizard, whose spell had suddenly petrified all living things, and thus bequeathed to us these weird groups of fossil giants. Geologists, however, give us a more common-place reason for this strange formation. They tell how, between these masses of black trap rock, and the columnar trap which crests the sea-cliffs, there lie beds of soft shale and crumbly limestone and oolite; and that as these slowly wear away, the superincumbent mass of rock breaks up, and remains standing in huge isolated blocks and pinnacles like gigantic castles and figures. This process is slowly but continually going on, and therefore, year by year, these strange rock forms must multiply, as the breaking up of each winter's frost loosens fresh masses of crag.

To see the Quiraing from the upper road, conveys a very poor notion of it; and though the scramble to the foot of the rocks lies over slippery grass and sharp-cutting stones, it well repays the fatigue. Behind the great needle, there is a cleft in the rock hardly

seen from below. You must scramble up here, over the same sharp fragments of disintegrated rock—a most toilsome process, and one very trying to shoe-leather—and at last you reach the summit ; and, standing in the cleft of the mighty cliff which towers above you on either side, you look down into a cup of greenest pasture, closed in on every hand by the great black crag. In the middle of this amphitheatre lies one gigantic mass of rock, a huge oblong about forty feet high. The top of this is perfectly flat, and carpeted with the richest green grass, smooth as a lawn, and measuring about three hundred feet in length, by half that width.

This rock is the *Quiraing par excellence* ; and though the meaning of the word is uncertain, it is understood to imply that it was the sheep-fold of some one once famous, who, driving his flocks thither at the approach of danger, found here rich pasture and a safe hiding-place from foray and raid, at a height of upwards of a thousand feet above the sea, which washes the base of the green hill.

As you look down from this high post, through some cleft between the great rock spires and towers, your eye wanders first over a succession of grassy slopes and hillocks, till it rests on that broad, gleaming surface—

“With its multitudinous sparkle,  
And its countless laughing ripple,”

all dotted with islands—some near, some faintly visible in the far horizon ; while, looking towards the mainland, you discern the great hills of Ross and Sutherland. That the islands are tolerably numerous, we are well aware, having in our infancy been taught that the Hebrides are 490 in number. This, of course, includes every rocky islet as far south as Bute and Arran, whereon pasturage for even one sheep may be found. Of these, 130 are inhabited.

I spent many delightful days alone in this rocky wilderness, enjoying its beauty and its solitude beyond description ; and, above all, its intensity of silence, rarely broken, save by the crowing of some cheery old grouse calling its mate, or by the quick whizz of their wings as they shot past me—sounds which, to a Child of the Moorland, are about the pleasantest that can be heard, associated, as they are, with many a sunny day among the heathery hills.

Moreover, there is a charm in the feeling of out-and-out patriotism of the one bird that is essentially British, and that positively refuses to exist in any corner of the earth save his native moors, where he and his family have from time immemorial lived their jolly and independent lives.

As a general rule, tourists visiting the Quiraing only come by the coach, and "do" the rocks in a couple of hours, during which a fair amount of whisky is consumed, and the echoes are awakened by discordant shouts and songs. It rarely occurs to them to stop a night in the Uig Inn ; so, when the steamer lands them at Portree, they drive upwards of twenty miles, returning the same day. The excellent roads make this easy enough ; and at the time of our visit, rival coaches had reduced one another's prices to such a pitch, that they were carrying passengers at one penny per mile ! Whether, like the Kilkenny cats, they succeeded in devouring one another, or whether either survived, I cannot tell.

But this I know—that he who would learn the lesson of the hills, must go forth from the multitude, and learn it in silence and solitude ; that nature's voice may whisper to him in sweet low tones that cannot be discerned, amid the jarring sounds of human mirth. Never more forcibly than in this place does one realize the truth and beauty of such a description, as that given by Wordsworth of a solitary wanderer, with soul absorbed in intensest sympathy with nature, looking down on such a scene as this, and revelling in its utter loneliness :

" From the naked top  
Of some bold head-land, he beheld the sun  
Rise up and bathe the world in light ! He looked—  
Ocean and earth, the solid frame of earth  
And ocean's liquid mass, in gladness lay  
Beneath him ; far and wide the clouds were touched,  
And in their silent faces could he read  
Unutterable love. Sound needed none,  
Nor any voice of joy ; his spirit drank  
The spectacle,—sensation, soul, and form,  
All melted into him ; they swallowed up  
His animal being ; in them did he live,  
And by them did he live ; they were his life."

Sometimes while you sit here entranced, a shadow passes over, and as you look up, you may see the Great Golden Eagle soar from its eyrie on the highest crag, cleaving the air with strong steady wing (measuring perhaps six feet from tip to tip), and now scanning Duntulm's lambs, which would be tempting prizes to carry back to the eaglets, in their nest of rushes and heather.

Sometimes the Osprey sails along, for it, too, breeds among these cliffs; but it makes for the river, and would rather catch fish for itself, like an honest bird, than molest the flocks. The Kite is less scrupulous, and glides along, marking where the weak and sickly lamb may become his prey. The shepherds call him the *gled*, because of his smooth gliding flight.

One sight for which I vainly watched both here and in the Himalayas, is that of the eagle teaching her eaglets to fly, ready, the moment the young wings are weary, to fly below, and stay them from falling—an image employed with such force and beauty, in that last song of Moses, sung in the waste howling wilderness, on the eve of his last ascent to the Arabian mountains, where he was to die alone on Mount Nebo, and where the eagle, looking down from his lonely eyrie, would strengthen his own spirit with the lesson of faith and trust he had just been teaching to his people.

One day while I was sitting as usual on the lonely hill-side, I was amazed to see first one group—then another—and another, of tidy folk in their Sunday best, coming in an almost continuous stream along the bleak road from Portree. Then I found that there was to be a sacramental preaching on the hill-side many miles away. It was to last a week, and this great multitude was gathering from every farm and village in the district. Many of the people had walked thirty miles, and would stay two or three days; though where a hundredth part of them could hope to find cover I cannot imagine. Doubtless vast numbers must have slept in the open air, and happily the weather was hot and dry. Still, in these regions it is apt to change at any moment, and the most cloudless sunshine may be succeeded by a prolonged spell of pitiless rain, in which case, what *would* become of all these people!

The multitude of carts and curious vehicles of all sorts which

passed this day and the next was really amazing, and *such* primitive carts and harness ! A bit of rope or twisted bent from the nearest hillock, with a stick to act as crupper ! Sometimes a very good dog-cart would pass, full of well-dressed people, the old mare trotting cheerily along, followed by her foal, and every now and then stopping to give it a drink !

I was once present at one of these great sacramental gatherings, when about three thousand people had assembled on the wild coast of Ross-shire (those rugged mountain ranges which we behold as we look down from the Quiraing, and across the blue straits). A more picturesque scene I have rarely beheld. It recalled visions of the old Covenanters. As we gazed over the bleak expanse of hills, we marvelled whence that great concourse of human beings could have assembled, till we heard that not only every shepherd's hut in the district, but almost every island and village within forty miles, had sent its pilgrims to the preaching ; some by boat, some on foot. Not the able-bodied only, but some poor half-paralyzed creatures, who took days of hard walking and crawling (sometimes literally crawling on all-fours), dragging their weary steps down those steep paths, that they might sit at the feet of some favourite, trusted teacher, and, with child-like intensity of interest, drink in the old, old story from his lips. The preachings were, as usual, to extend over several days.

But it was on the Great Day of the Feast, that we found our way there, when on the green sward was set the long table covered with fair white linen, round which were gathered a great company of devout worshippers, passing the Sacred Cup and Bread from hand to hand. From time to time a Gaelic psalm was raised, the precentor singing every alternate line alone, and the mass of voices taking up the wild tune, low at first, then swelling into full chorus, and again dying away, like the booming of waves in some ocean cave. The people were all seated on the grass, or clustering in groups up the side of the hill, which formed a natural amphitheatre of grey rocks or fading russet brackens, whose " calm decay " was in keeping with the great peace of all around.

The majority of the old wives wore the cleanest of white mutches ; some with large white handkerchiefs tied over them and great blue

cotton umbrellas, for though it was an October afternoon, the heat of the sun was sickening. Nevertheless the men all sat bareheaded, looking up to the preacher with earnest weather-beaten faces, the warm colours of their hair and beards recalling the russet of the withering brackens around them. Whatever their occupation, nearly all were dressed in the uniform dark blue cloth peculiar to our seafaring folk.

On the rocky hill above, groups of little rough Highland cattle were feeding, wondering doubtless at such an invasion of their solitude. Close by flowed a tiny streamlet of purest crystal, yielding precious store to all the thirsty multitude. At our feet lay the great calm ocean, on which the sun's glittering reflection was changing from quicksilver to molten gold. Beyond, faintly seen through the hot misty haze, lay the grand Skye hills, all mirrored as clearly as the near cliffs or the countless islands. From the little *clachan* of black bothies on the shore, the blue smoke rose in transparent columns, and there was quiet on every side. Only the distant cry of myriad sea-birds, or the nearer song of the laverock, broke that great stillness, and now and then the crow of black-cock or grouse, or the heavy flap of a heron floating past on leaden wing, fell on the listening ear.

There was something in the scene, that insensibly carried the mind back to the multitudes who assembled on the mountains, or by the lakes of Judea, in those early days before the name of "Christian" had been yet bestowed on the new sect.

One marked change, however, there must be in this modern teaching from that of those early days when the disciples, continuing steadfast in the apostles' doctrine, met *daily* for the breaking of bread and prayer,—a custom which we know was adhered to by the early Church, in Rome, Milan, and Spain, and which was retained by the African Church at least until the time of St. Augustine, that is to say, for the first four hundred years after the Feast was instituted. In all these churches it was optional whether the Holy Communion should be celebrated daily or weekly. The majority of Christians seem to have received twice a week, but in no case was less than one celebration in the week thought of.



These modern Christians have but one such meeting in the year, and *out of the three thousand* assembled on the hill-side, at the great annual celebration of which I speak, *only eighty* were communicants, the youngest of whom was a shepherd upwards of forty years of age. Painful as it always is to witness the crowds that pour out of our great city churches whenever the "comfortable words" of invitation are about to be spoken (recalling the sad reproach once uttered by their Lord when, of the ten whom He had cleansed, one only would return to give Him thanks), it seems more painful still, to know that these who have gathered from so far to hear His Word, are actually deterred from approaching His table by the impracticable standard of "fitness" exacted by their teachers—the awful warnings known as "Fencing the Tables," whereby the sick and sad-hearted are turned away sorrowing; while those only, whom a human standard declares to be whole, may approach the feast of the Great Physician. This state of things seems to grow worse rather than better, if it be true that not very many years ago these great gatherings sometimes numbered ten thousand souls, of whom two thousand were communicants. In this respect, at least, the Northern Highlands might do well to take a lesson from the Lowlands.

One reason alleged for this rare celebration of the Great Feast in the more remote districts, is the difficulty of obtaining wheaten bread, which alone is deemed suitable for use on this occasion. Dr. Norman Macleod speaks of a parish familiar to him, where the old minister used to be obliged to send a man on horseback over moors and across stormy arms of the sea, for sixty miles, to fetch the wheaten loaves. And in most of the Isles, such bread is only seen when brought by the steamer from Glasgow, and of course the steamer only touches at principal ports, with which many isles have rare communication.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In Pacific Isles, wise teachers have deemed the bread-fruit and cocoa-nut juice, which form the ordinary food of the people, a fit substitute for the unattainable bread and wine which formed the ordinary food of Judean peasants.

## CHAPTER VI.

## AFLOAT.

A Music-Room—Duntulm Castle—Fladda of the Ocean—Holy Stones—Schloch Maddie Cave—Legend of McCrimmon—Water Kelpies—Brownies—Legends—The Kilt Rock—Marine Forests—Flat-fishes—A Basaltic Coast—The Storr Rock—The Ross-shire Coast—Legends of St. Malruba—Sacrifices of Cattle—The Need-Fire—Start for the Herring Fishing—Storms—King Haco's Fleet.

To those who make their home in the Isles, the possession of a yacht, or, at least, of a good sailing-boat, becomes almost a necessity. In the first place, all beauty lies along the sea-board ; and the visit to a neighbour even on the same island, which may entail a wearisome land journey through dreary country, is often a short and beautiful sail ; when, instead of noisily jolting and grinding along a hard road, you may glide silently through air and water—perhaps the only way in which you can ever revel at once in stillness and motion. Besides, to be continually within sight of countless islands, and chains of blue hills, without the means of exploring them, would be tantalizing indeed.

So it came to pass that the little fairy “Gannet” flapped her white wings one sunny afternoon, and bade us sail with her over the merry green waves to the opposite coast of Grieshernish, one of the few sheltered nooks where the plantations have actually struggled up to treehood.

Here we found our chief amusement in a wonderful music-room, wherein every conceivable variety of musical instrument had its appointed place. Besides piano and harmonium, flute and guitar, there was every variety of organ, from the finger-organ down to the most elaborate grinder, with such an array of puppets as would have made the fortune of an itinerant organist. Then there was every species of large mechanical instrument, from a common musical-box up to a large self-acting organ, which played all the favourite operas like a first-rate brass band. Another, something similar, called a Euterpean, gave us more solemn music. Others play reels and dance-music. Next come harp, violin, violoncello, bagpipes, trumpet, cornet-à-piston, reed-pipe—every musical instrument you can conceive down to a Jew's-harp. For aught I know, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer may have been stowed away in some recess of that wonderful room. It was a quaint fancy of one who had spent his best years on Indian plains, and who had devised this method of shutting out sight and sound of the wild storms and tempests that so often raved round his western home.

We returned to Uig in the evening, so well pleased with the swift, lovely little yacht, that we determined to start at once for a cruise round the coast—a cruise so delightful, that I am utterly at a loss whether to award the palm of real enjoyment to yachting in the Hebrides, or camping in the Himalayas.

Each day we sailed just so far as might seem pleasant, gliding silently over the waters, rejoicing in the stillness of our noiseless progress; no jarring sound of wheels; no straining engines, or whirring steam; only the plash of wavelets when we anchored for the night, in some quiet natural harbour, under the lee of some bluff headland, whence we could row close in shore, among all the beautiful cliffs and caves, landing on the small islands, to the astonishment of every species of sea-fowl, and of colonies of rabbits, which last proved a very welcome addition to our larder.

One favourite anchorage was just below Duntulm Castle; in a clear, green bay, with a pleasant island on one side, where multitudes of large, white-winged gannets make their home, and gathered wonderingly round their namesake. They were sorely puzzled by

our intrusion into this, their sanctum ; and often, as we sat on the brink of the cliff where they had built their nests, they would swoop past us again and again, flapping their great wings within a foot of us, with wild angry cries, as if to drive us away again.

Very pleasant it was in the early morning to land on this little island ; and though the smooth grassy slope was drenched with heavy dew, to clamber up to the top, and find oneself overlooking a precipitous rock-face, down into the clearest green depths of emerald-tinted waters, only disturbed by the ripple where the top of some broken basalt pillar rises above the surface.

The old castle stands on a great stack of clustering pillars, jutting into the quiet bay. On either side, and in the background, lie smooth green slopes, crowned with another range of reddish basalt. At this early hour the quiet mists were still sleeping in the valley, and above them towered the Quiraing in dark solid mass. Then, as the first rosy flush touched the hill-top, the dewy vapours floated upward to greet the dawn, and the closed flowers opened their cups, and all manner of happy winged insects awoke to dance in the quivering sunlight. Everything was quiet and still, and but for the querulous notes of the sea-birds, there was no sound save that of

“ . . . . The murmuring surge,  
That on th' unnumbered idle pebbles chafes ;”

and that melody never ceases, for there is not a grain of sand within miles of Duntulm—only sharp shingly beach ; so those who want to bathe, and love to paddle about on the soft, yellow sand, must go to Kilmaloig Bay, or to Loch Staffin.

Now, if you turn and look out to sea, there lies the Long Island on the one hand, and on the other Loch Seaforth, and the wild hills of Torridon, in Ross-shire. And much nearer you is the Island of Fladdahuan—Fladda of the Ocean, one of those early Missionaries who here built his cell and chapel. The island, as seen from here, is like some great sea monster. For one large isle lies like a great solid head, while a long line of smaller rocky knobs suggests the dorsal fin of some huge creature swimming across the Minch.

The ruins of Fladda's chapel were long extant. On the altar lay

a round, bluish stone, which was always moist. Should fishermen be detained here by contrary winds, they first walked sunwise round the chapel, then poured water on this stone Hindu-fashion, and a favourable breeze would certainly spring up ere long. The magic stone likewise cured diseases, and the people swore solemn oaths by it.

There was a similar stone in the Isle of Arran, of a green colour, and the size of a goose's egg. It was known as the stone of St. Molingus, and was kept in custody of the Clan Chattan; and the popular belief was, not only that it cured diseases, but that, if it were thrown at an advancing foe, they would be terror-stricken, and retreat. It was also a solemn thing to swear by.

I was strongly reminded of this Hebridean custom when, wandering in the solemn shade of the great forests of Ceylon, in the immediate neighbourhood of the ancient ruined city of Pollonaruwa, we were shown, in the court of a village temple, a flat slab of stone, esteemed so sacred, that the most hardened villain dares not perjure himself when compelled to swear by it. He must lay thereon a firnam—a coin less than a farthing in value—and then take the required oath.

In these our Western Isles there were many varieties of stones esteemed sacred—more especially such as were perforated; also various crystals, such as those to which I alluded when speaking of the crystal balls at Iona.

Curiously enough, the fisherman's lucky stone of St. Fladda has its exact counterpart in Japan, where (near the Shrines of Isé, where the sacred black stone is held in such deep reverence) there is a lonely place of pilgrimage called Futami-Sama—a dull promontory of grey shingle, jutting into the sea, and pointing towards three isolated rocks. A low wall forms the only enclosure, and within it stands a wooden altar, whereon lie *four big green stones*. To these the fishers and other pilgrims present their humble offerings—circles of twisted straw, a little rice, or some odd little morsels of green pottery.

In the Torres Straits, likewise, the Turtle-giving gods, and the Rain gods, are simply round painted stones. To the former, offerings

are invariably made by the fishers, while the Rain gods are propitiated in times of drought by a libation of precious water.<sup>1</sup>

To return to our post on the rock. The sleepers in the yacht are now all astir, and as we look down on the picturesque sailors in their blue jerseys and long scarlet knitted caps, all so busy, unfurling the white sails, we know that there is a chance of a move before long. So we hail the wee boat, that has been fetching the morning supply of milk, and practise rowing, till a tune on the pipes announces that breakfast is ready.

Afterwards we sail slowly along the coast, starting early while the sun is still in the east, lighting up the cliffs, and keeping as near the shore as we dare, else we should lose all beauty. And the slower the better, for every fresh turn shows us new, strange caves, or masses of tall basaltic columns, sometimes cut across, as if by some giant knife, showing a slanting section of all the pillars, but more frequently overlaid with rich soil and green pasture, and above it all the ever-changing masses of the Quiraing tower like grim fortifications.

Seen from this side, one can hardly believe that they are not great masses of grey masonry, so utterly different are they from the red or yellow basalt which composes the greater part of the sea-coast for the next few miles. A very wonderful formation is this basalt, with those regular hexagonal columns, that look as though carefully chiselled according to geometrical laws. Learned men tell us that it was once a red-hot fluid, which, in cooling, crystallized in

<sup>1</sup> Away to the south-east lie the Fijian Isles, now too thoroughly Christian to indulge in any such vain worship, but a much-revered god of some twenty years ago was the *Wairua*,—an oval stone, the size of a swan's egg, which, with several smaller stones, children of the god, lay in the hollow of a tree beside the Rewa river. A similar stone at Bau gave birth to a little stone whenever a Chiefess increased the population. This sympathetic deity has been removed, but her children remain to mark the place of their birth. In the Mission Garden at Bau are preserved several other stones of the same class, formerly held in great reverence. One resembles a swan's egg, and rests on a natural pillar of stone, about two feet in height. Another lot of smaller stone eggs, still lie wrapped in a native cloth, and smeared with the turmeric applied by their last worshipper.



SELOON MADONE DAYE.



this manner, and they show us experiments with chemical mud, which being allowed to cool, gradually assumes the same forms, and give us miniatures of Staffa, and all this coast.

Very beautiful are these caves and rock masses, where, on the slightest provocation, the green waves rush in with such sudden swell, and dash right over them in wild white spray. This it is which makes the danger of lingering too long in the pleasant nooks and caves, sheltered from the open sea. You may chance to find, as you row confidently out of your little haven, that a sudden breeze has sprung up, fretting the white sea-horses, and making them chafe and toss so angrily that your tiny boat may find it hard work enough to return to the mother-craft.

Such risk as this, I encountered at an exquisite spot in Kilmaluoc Bay, so called in memory of St. Moluoc, whose lowly cell once stood on the green shores of this quiet little harbour. As we rowed close in shore, we discovered a place where the rock-face was riven, and showed light within. There was just space for the little boat to float in, passing under a low archway in the rock, when suddenly we emerged into an open space so lovely that any scene-painter who could produce such a transformation-scene for next Christmas would assuredly make his fortune.

We had floated into a circular basin, whose rocky sides opened into several long deep caves, beneath whose shadow the water grew dark and mysterious, of the deepest emerald tint, while beneath us lay a clear, transparent aqua-marine, through whose lustrous depths we could plainly see our own shadows rest on the yellow sand far below. Tiny jelly-fish, edged with lilac spots and long white fringe, floated beside the delicate pink seaweeds in the clear green water; and as we looked upward to the deep blue sky, we saw that the rock was crowned with heather, and ferns, and tall grasses, changing from golden cream to silvery, as the light wind rippled over them, though no breath of air stirred near us. And from every cleft in the rock grew tall spikes of crimson fox-gloves (the folk's glove of olden days), and clusters of blue-bells, and all manner of flowers, blue and white and yellow.

There was not a sound to be heard save the swish, swish of the

dancing wavelets just outside. So perfectly did the rocks round us deaden all noise, that when the yacht fired her little gun as a signal for the immediate return of the boat, I still sat quietly painting, utterly unconscious of any change, and it was not till we had floated clear of the arch by which we had entered, and caught sight of the open sea, that we realized anything being amiss. A heavy ground swell had set in, and the yacht, not daring to lie where she was, was running before the wind, seeking a safer harbour, and leaving us either to go ashore, or pull after her, as might seem best to Norman Campbell, the trusty yachtsman, who was rowing me. He being a strong muscular young fellow, and a thorough seaman, chose the latter, and a stiff two miles' pull he had, before we came up with the yacht, which had found a place where she could venture to lie to and wait for us.<sup>1</sup>

I fear Martin the skipper expended some forcible Gaelic on my escort, but these Skye lads are used to gales of all sorts, and are not easily ruffled ; and when we anchored for the night in beautiful Loch Staffin Bay, the most harmonious peace reigned among the crew, and the hours were enlivened as usual by wild Gaelic songs and choruses, or by stories of smuggling, in which the fathers and kinsfolk of the narrators generally took a prominent part. For to have been a professional smuggler is considered just as respectable as any other method of earning a livelihood.

Then we were told many wild legends of the coast, and can bear witness how marvellously these gain in interest when the narrator can point out the very spot where the weird spirit appeared, or the miserable victim perished. And if divers caves *will* claim the same history, well, you must try and believe it to be true of each in turn.

Take such a wild, wailing pibroch as McCrimmon's Lament, which, whether played on the pipes in the early morning at a Highland funeral, with an accompaniment of wild cries from the sea-birds,—or else sung by a chorus of plaintive voices, while the

<sup>1</sup> Handsome Norman Campbell—our escort on so many pleasant days—was drowned in the summer of 1890. He and another man went out in a yacht's boat. The boat was found capsized, and both bodies were washed ashore.

little waves splash against the ship, and the wind moans in fitful gusts—is about the most wildly mournful of all Gaelic Laments.

It becomes positively thrilling when the singers pause, and pointing to a dark yawning cavern, extending far under the land, tell you that there, into that very cave, the bold piper marched, followed by his faithful dog; that he ventured bravely on, resolved to explore the dark passage, and that about a mile inland, where a deep hole is supposed to open into the subterranean passage, his watchful friends still heard his heart-stirring music, when suddenly it ceased, and soon an awful struggle was heard, and McCrimmon's cry of anguish arose, telling of some awful creature that was grappling with him in the darkness. Then the cries ceased. Soon afterwards the miserable dog, which had been flayed alive, and had lost even the power of howling, crept to the mouth of the cave to die. And since that day no rash adventurer has been so foolhardy as to tempt the like fate.

I must confess to have been painfully *désillusionnée* on hearing the same story told of the cave at Keil, in the Mull of Cantyre, and of half a dozen different spots on the west coast. Nevertheless you sometimes hear deliciously “creepy” stories, such legends as may well inspire the fishers with an ill-defined, mysterious dread of certain spots.

Such is the tale that tells how on the shore of one of those dim isles (either Barra or Tyree, I forget which) is the cave where Ossian and his heroes sit spellbound in a long deep sleep. One day a bold fisher discovered this very cave, and entering, beheld this grand band of sleepers. Near them hung the magic horn, at the third blast of which, blown by mortal lips, he knew they would all awaken. He was a brave man, who scorned all fear, so he put his lips to the horn and blew such a shrill call that the cormorants and the sea-mews came shrieking forth from the dark recesses of the cavern. A strange indescribable dread took possession of him; nevertheless he repeated the blast more loudly than before, and every rock seemed to echo back the sound with strange spirit-laughter. Ere its tones had died away, he who seemed chief of the heroes, and was in truth Ossian himself, stirred in his sleep

and half awoke. He bade the rash intruder cease, and turning on his side, slept once more. The terrified fisher fled, and straightway sailed from the magic isle, and from that day to this no man has ever been able to find the cave where the heroes of Ossian sleep.

Although the influence of the clergy and of the schoolmaster is rapidly rooting out all traces of grey superstition, it still has some hold in the more remote corners of the land ; and the non-existence of kelpies and brownies and *urisks* is by no means so clearly proven, that a midnight encounter with them would be a thing to risk lightly. The kelpies, as you know, are water-spirits which are always malignant, and delight in causing the floods to rise rapidly and overwhelm the unwary traveller, while their mocking cry rings in his drowning ears.

That the kelpies are "bye-ordinar" irreverent is evident from the legend of the old kirkyard at Conan<sup>1</sup>—a green dreamy hillock, where autumn leaves float silently down from overshadowing boughs, a russet covering for the grey mossy stones. Round the foot of the hillock rushes the dark-brown river, once the favourite haunt of a kelpie. One wild night when the storm was raging and the river was in spate, the song of the kelpie was heard above the voice of the winds and waters, and those who heard it trembled, for they knew that the kelpie sought human blood. Then in hot haste a messenger rode up whose errand would brook no delay, and he urged his horse to swim the stream, but the steed shrank back affrighted, and strong hands drew back the foolhardy rider, and vowed he should not thus court destruction. So they locked him up within the old chapel, and all night long the wild tempest battled and raved. When the morning light dawned they went to release him, that he might go on his way in safety, but they found him dead, for the kelpie had entered the sanctuary, and had not even dreaded the holy water, but seizing its victim, had held his face therein till he was drowned. So you see it was a very irreverent kelpie indeed !

All over Scotland there are legends of these water-goblins. Thus at Choill-a-chroin, "the wood of lamentation," near Loch

<sup>1</sup> Not the Conan in Skye, but its more important namesake in Ross-shire.

Vennachar, a beautiful pony once came playfully up to a merry group of children, and suffered several of the little innocents to clamber on its back. Then suddenly wheeling round, it galloped off with them, and plunged into the cold waves, and the mothers wept and wailed greatly for the little ones who might never return. This was the form in which it constantly appeared to the Shetlanders.

Sometimes a kelpie would assume the form of a splendid black horse, which would appear at the market in charge of some strange uncanny-looking fellow. So fine a beast was sure to find a purchaser, and for a while all would go well, only its strange love for water was noticed, and it would prance and plunge with delight when a bucketful was thrown over it. At last, on some distant expedition, it was sure to be overtaken by a wild storm, and when the ford had swelled to a raging torrent, and its master was compelled to trust to the good swimming of his steed, he discovered too late that he was bestriding the awful kelpie, who would plunge with him into the depths of the foaming waters, never to rise again.

We heard many a strange story, too, of those kindly brownies, who used to do so many good turns to lighten the drudgery of farm or household work, and take their payment in bowls of cream and other delicacies, just as the glashans did in the Isle of Man, or the pwaccas in Wales, or as the gins still do in the far-away deserts of Scinde. In every case the description of the creature is the same; he is like a dwarfish human being, covered with long hair, and breathing heavily; having moreover large eyes and great strength, which he willingly employs for any mortal to whom he takes a fancy, working for him hard and faithfully year after year; but nevertheless apt to be sullen and morose, and on slight provocation, to depart for ever.

It is curious to find this good brownie doing just the same work in the far east as in these western isles; but this is only one of many kindred superstitions. The people of Scinde have from time immemorial been able to draw the milk from their neighbour's cows, just as well as any Highland wife; their witches divine from sheep-bones, and take the form of tigers and other beasts, just as

easily as a Scottish witch transforms herself into a hare or a stag. They tell wild stories of rakshas or demons of the mountains, and of bhoots or ghosts of the dead; but those who have tried to collect these legends say that there, as in our own Highlands, this becomes year by year more difficult, for the old folk are dying off, and the rising generation do not care to speak of these things, so that the old stories are fast disappearing from the east as well as from the west.

In South Uist there is the valley of Glenslyte, haunted by spirits called "Great Men," and formerly whoever entered this valley must perforce repeat certain sentences, committing themselves to the guidance of these beings: for should this ceremony be omitted, they believed they would inevitably go mad, which (like the Chinese custom of beating gongs during an eclipse to save the sun from extinction) involved a risk too great to run.

Till very lately there existed all manner of curious methods for consulting oracles, such as sewing up a man in a cow's hide, and leaving him for the night on some hill-top, that he might be made a spirit-medium. The commonest sort of divination was practised by means of the shoulder-blades of beasts slain in sacrifice, just as at the present day the shepherds of Niolo in Corsica foretell coming events by the left shoulder-blade of a goat or sheep.

And it is a matter of firm belief now, that charms exist whereby a man can spoil his neighbour's barm (yeast), and a woman can prevent cows from yielding their milk, and, by some invisible agency, appropriate it for her own use. She can also by evil arts take away the milk from nursing mothers. As to the superstitions connected with death, they are still numberless. There are warnings in the flight of birds, the howling of dogs, sights and sounds mysterious and undefined; and which are readily construed into good or evil.

A hare or a fox crossing the path is held to be so sure a token of evil, that educated men have been known to turn back, declaring they could not travel after receiving such a sign of danger; and even in civilized Morayshire and Perthshire I know one or two stalwart men who have no hesitation in believing that certain poor

harmless old wives are witches, who have the power to take the form of those animals. One old wife lately told us that there had been some talk lately about poaching hares. "But deed she kent it was na auld Geordie, nor young Geordie either. For ye see, we're afeared o' th' hares. Ou, gin ye wad kill a hare ye dinna ken wha ye wad be killin'! Deed the half of them's witches!"

Nor is it very long since one of the gamekeepers (in whom our Sassenach friends are wont to behold their ideal of a stalwart Highlander) wounded a hare, and triumphantly told us that the next time he saw a certain innocent old wife at the kirk her arm was in a sling, so surely there remained no room for doubt as to her dealing in witchcraft! As to the stories concerning second sight (which answers to the clairvoyance of the south), they are legion, and implicitly believed to this day. There is scarcely a village in which some one has not been favoured by ghostly apparitions from dead or living. Either the person seen has already died, or else his doom is swiftly approaching.

Many are the tales concerning green-robed fairies, and their spleen against any one presuming to wear their chosen colour, especially on Friday, when they have double power, and when a genuine Highlander will shrink from any allusion to them as being "no canny," or at least to be made with marked respect, as to beings invisibly present, and who need to be conciliated.

Why these creatures should be called Daoine Shi'ich, or men of peace, I cannot imagine, unless from that curious feeling which prompts so many races to propitiate evil demons who might harm them, rather than serve the good who will do them no ill. For these men of peace are spiteful creatures, jealous of human joys, and especially anxious to abstract newborn babies (which they have only power to do before baptism), leaving in their place their own cross-grained brats, with voracious appetites, always "skirling" for meat. These are known as changelings; hence the use of that name to describe a puny, unsatisfactory child.

Throughout the Isles it is supposed that idiots are fairy children, and when (as is often the case) these poor creatures are wizened and emaciated, while in face and character their utter childishness

blends with occasional touches of shrewd mother-wit, their parentage is considered to be proven beyond doubt. The sorely-tried foster-mother has, however, one remedy. She follows the ebbing tide, and when it is far out she lays the screaming child on the shore, and there leaves it to yell by itself. Its cries are, however, not unheeded, for the fairies are on the watch to protect it, and at the last moment will spirit away their noxious offspring, and restore the stolen human child. Just as the waves approach it, the mother returns, and, whether "skirling" or smiling, she must accept as her own the creature she then finds.

Even on the mainland the faith in fairy lore is not by any means extinct, as was recently proved to us when a lady in Banffshire asked an old woman how she came to know of a rather unusual cure for some illness. She replied that she had learnt that, and many other things, from a wife who had been spirited away by the fairies, and had lived with them underground for eight years. But having said thus much, the old lady relapsed into a mysterious silence, and though much questioned as to the manners and customs of the fairies and their guest, she refused to say another word, for "Ou! it wasna safe to be talking o' the gude folk; maybe they wad be spiring her awa' next!"

The belief in all these weird and wondrous legends has been greatly kept up by the old custom of story-telling round the peat fires in the long winter evenings; but the ban of the Church now lies so heavily on all that tends to encourage superstition, that the popular lore seems in danger of dying out, or of being preserved only by such collectors as Campbell of Islay, whose Gaelic mother tongue and local sympathies enable him to "draw" every blue bonnet and white mutch that cross his path.

It is a matter of considerable difficulty now-a-days to induce any of the younger generation to relate these old stories, partly from the dread of being laughed at by unbelievers, who look on their legends as being "just blethers," and still more because their solemn unimaginative teachers try to put down all such foolish tales as utterly unworthy of wise and Christian men, though at the same time, the schoolmasters labour hard to store the minds of their



pupils with an amount of Greek and Latin mythology that would astonish most village schools in England. They little think what exceeding interest there may be for learned men in this old Gaelic mythology which is so fast dying out, and of its many strange analogies to the most ancient legends of the far east.

There is scarcely one of these fables which has not its twin brother in those of far-distant lands, and in these days when the common origin of the Aryan races is a question so widely discussed,—when we are told how strongly Gaelic is akin to Sanskrit, and when some maintain that Ceylon and St. Kilda were alike peopled by a Celtic race which started from a central point in Asia,—it is strange indeed to find that both these islands have from time immemorial believed the same curious traditions,—somewhat altered of course in their oral transmission from generation to generation, but virtually the same.

In the Hebrides you will hear how John, the fisher's son, leaped his horse over a strait to an island in the Sound of Barra, where he slew a dragon with nine heads and rescued a beautiful princess.

Precisely such a nine-headed dragon as is minutely described in these Gaelic legends, is found sculptured on temples in Cambodia and India, where the old serpent-worship prevailed in the most remote ages.

A parallel to the history of how the Hindu god, Indra, slew the water monster, Vitra (as told in the *Rig Veda*), has been pointed out in the Gaelic legend of how Fraoch killed a great serpent on the Ross of Mull.

The wildest tales of Ossian are found again in the old Persian poets ; and a thousand other instances might be adduced.

But all these curious coincidences between the customs and traditions of the Eastern and Western world, have tempted us to wander on till we have drifted off into a vague world of superstitions that have carried us far away from the old Gaelic songs and legends, with which our sailors whiled away the lovely summer evening.

It was late before the little yacht was ready for the night, and her crew turned into their tiny cabin "for'ard." The evening lights were so beautiful that we lingered on deck, hour after hour, scarcely

knowing how to turn away from so much loveliness. There had been a golden sunset behind the Quiraing, which still stood out in

KILT ROCK.

rich purple against a lemon-coloured sky—while the calm sea reflected both. Each changing tint of the opal had rested by turns

on all the islands and the hills of Torridon. Now the clear moonlight gleamed on the water, and silvered the soft white mists that half shrouded Ben Etra, even lending poetry to the little inn, with its group of thatched byres and offices.

But the other side of the bay lay in its own deep shadow, and it was not till we saw it in the early morning that we realized how beautiful it was. Green banks sloped gently down to the water's edge, crowned with perpendicular stacks of basalt, in three distinct masses. It is from these basaltic columns that Loch Staffin, like Staffa, takes its name. Nearer us, a great headland of rock and greenest grass rose abruptly, half enclosing a shore of the smoothest yellow sand; while every mark and cleft in the rock lay clearly mirrored below. The scene was irresistibly suggestive of bathing; so, being by this time fully competent to pass as "able-bodied seawomen," we rowed ourselves ashore, and vowed that no bathing-ground had ever been so charming; and that here must be our head-quarters for the present.

Later in the day we had a lovely row all along the coast to a wonderful headland known as the Kilt Rock, by reason of the many-coloured strata of which it is composed. From the green sea upwards, layers of oolitic limestone, oolitic freestone and shale, alternating with lines of grass, lie horizontally; while rising vertically from these is a great mass of red, brown, and yellow columnar basalt. So huge are these pillars, that they quite dwarf those of Staffa; indeed Macculloch, whose sea-side geology was generally accurate, calculates them at five or six times the magnitude of those in the wonderful little Isle. On the top of this cliff<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In case you care for further particulars of the "warp and woof," which combine to produce this extraordinary specimen of geological tartan, I may quote Professor Edward Forbes' description of the series of formations shown in the face of the cliff.

First of all comes the crowning mass of huge columnar basalt, red, brown, and yellow. Below this lies—

1. A thin band of small-rolled pebbles, mingled with fragments of jet.
2. Crumbling blue shales, with fossils, five feet in thickness.
3. A thin band of concretionary limestone.
4. Five feet of blue shale, with ammonites and large belemnites.

lies an extensive loch (Loch Mialt is the sound, though as to Gaelic spelling, he is rash who ventures to attempt it!)—a loch with reedy shores, haunted by innumerable water-fowl. Hence the waters fall into the sea below, in flashing spray—a clear fall of 300 feet.

As we rowed slowly along, in the warm bright sun (so warm indeed, that the men's faces and arms—tough sailors though they were—were all blistered with the heat), we looked up to the cliffs above, and down into the waters beneath, with indescribable delight, so wonderful is the contrast between those mighty rock walls, with the perfect stillness of the exquisite green water, through the clear depths of which we peered down into the marine forest, whence trees and shrubs, of every variety of form and colour, stretched their branches upward to the light. There grow giant brown sea-warees of many forms, some waving like graceful palms; others tossing great arms aloft, like the patriarchs of this untrodden jungle. Some have thick stems, and broad fleshy leaves of the richest golden brown, every leaf ten or twelve feet long. Some are smooth and leathery, and others all plaited, and fringed, and folded, and twisted, and crimped, as if the laundry-maids of the sea had no other work to do but just to get them up. Then we passed over others with large fan-like leaves; some that looked like bunches of long pink or green ribbon; and countless varieties of

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5. Two bands of hard grey limestone, weathering yellow, three feet.
  6. Dark blue fossiliferous shales, seven feet.
  7. Red and yellowish limestone, with fossils, one foot.
  8. Blue shales, one foot.
  9. Ferruginous sands, with fragments of wood in the state of jet, one foot.
  10. Concretionary limestone, with fossils, one foot.
  11. Soft white sands, three feet.
  12. Hard fossiliferous sandstones, two feet.
  13. Grey sands, with carbonaceous streaks, five feet.
  14. Hard shales, with bands of fossil wood, three feet.
  15. About fourteen bands of loose slaty and shaly beds, about twelve feet in thickness, resting on the basalt which lies beneath the waves.

Add to this varied mineral colouring occasional stripes and patches of vivid emerald and gold, wherever the kindly grass and moss has found a niche, and you perceive that this natural tartan is about as diverse as any "coat of many colours" ever woven in human loom.

delicate pink, and lilac, and olive sea-flowers and sea-weeds, like floating lace-work, woven in some fairy loom—more brilliant in this temperate sea, than either in tropics or colder regions.

And in all this beautiful, luxuriant vegetation, myriads of dainty sea creatures make their home. Every lace-like weed seems beaded with black pearls, which are the smallest mussels that ever were seen, each firmly moored to its anchorage by a silken cable. You cannot lift up the tiniest plant, but you will find on it a score of living things, whose delicacy of structure arrests your eye, even without the help of that best of companions, a small magnifying-glass.

As to the wonders of the invisible life of the sea, as shown by a good microscope—the almost invisible weeds, which give food and beautiful homes to millions of our fellow-creatures, and the endless varieties which float in every drop of water—*that* is a field of enjoyment quite by itself. Only, be sure that next time you get the chance, you look at some common oyster-spat through a good glass, for I think that (except perhaps the purple bunches of grapes, which are only dust from the blossoms of the marsh mallow,) no lifeless thing can be more beautiful.

But the most careless eye can scarcely look down into a sea whose depths teem with such exuberance of life, animal and vegetable, without noticing something of the beauty that nestles under every leaf, lodges under each root, hides in every crevice : thousands of creatures, each of wonderful organism, building their curious nests of sand and glutinous matter, floating on the warm surface of the water, or drifting lazily hither and thither in the gentle current.

After passing the Kilt Rock, we came to what seemed to me still more curious geological freaks. There were patches of many-coloured rock ; but in particular, just above the sea-level was a long layer of pale grey oolite, wherein at regular intervals were imbedded great round boulders, like huge black cannon-balls. We landed at Lon Fern, a region of black volcanic-looking rocks, some standing apart like quaint figures. One statue of John Knox in a black gown was so unmistakable, that we pointed to it simultaneously.

This bay is like one vast aquarium. I never before saw so many living creatures in so small a space. Such multitudes of sea-

anemones of every colour, and tiny star-fish, and little silvery eels, and shoals of fish no bigger than minnows. And then the countless varieties of crabs! Poor little half-naked hermits, dwellers in other folk's houses; and braver little creatures who are ready to fight life's battle for themselves, though they are so delicate as to be almost transparent, and their tender claws could scarcely nip the tiniest sea-anemone.

Sometimes a great big fellow (a parten, as we northerners call him) would swim up from his rock-home under the sea-weeds, and peer at us with his curious eyes, and then sink down again, faster than he rose, to his hiding-place in the fairy garden, among corallines and sea-weeds of every hue, crimson and gold and bronze—and lustrous metallic greens and purples. Besides these, there were innumerable jelly-fish, from the tiniest atoms of orange or red-currant jelly, to the great giants who would overflow the largest jelly mould that ever was made. And such beauties as they are! with their delicate rings and stars of lilac, and the fringe of long sensitive fingers floating in graceful festoons.

The longer we looked, the more convinced we were, that, in spite of Kingsley, we had really discovered for ourselves St. Brandan's Fairy Isle. There it lay before us, just as he describes it, "reflected double in the still, broad silver sea"—that wonderful water-world, where the water-babies, and all other little water-creatures, play hide and seek in the great water-forests. There, just as he tells us, was the Isle, "full of pillars, and its roots full of caves; and its pillars of black basalt, with ribbons of many-coloured sandstone, all curtained and draped with sea-weeds, the rocks covered with ten thousand sea-anemones of all beautiful colours and patterns, just like the gayest flower-bed. And here and there the soft white sand where the water-babies sleep every night, taking no heed of the little flounders which wriggle about in the sand, or of the crabs which lie buried under it, and only peep out with the tips of their eyes."

Should you let your boat float in very shallow water, where the smooth white sand is clearly seen through the exquisitely crystalline water, you may chance to see sundry flat-fishes of various kinds, burrowing in the sand, and only betraying their presence by an

occasional shuffling movement, as though they were ashamed of showing their ugly twisted faces. Strange to say, the fishers of our Scottish east coast have precisely the same legend as the Germans, to account for this peculiarity in the flounder, namely, that it was doomed to have a crooked face to all eternity as a punishment for having rudely mocked some other fish, and made faces at it as it passed! The grotesque ugliness of countenance thus immortalized is so fully appreciated by the people, that to address a person as "a dun skate" is a sort of climax of northern Billingsgate! The skate, however, has an independent ugliness of its own, and does not inherit it from any relationship to the crooked-faced flounder, being, in fact, a sort of flat dog-fish, and symmetrical in its structure.

Indeed these flat-fishes are very ugly—the whole family of them! and the more we learn concerning them, the more are we puzzled to account for the creation of this crooked generation. Why should a whole family of creatures have come into existence, which, though shaped something like a large coin, do begin life symmetrically, and for the first week of their babyhood swim vertically, like other fishes, with two sides alike, and an eye on either side of their head; and then, in a weak manner, as if tired of being poised on edge like a shilling, tumble over on one side, and so continue to the end of their days? Gradually the under side becomes bleached to a dead white, and the upper side assumes the colour of the sand or mud on which the fish most often rests—indeed it is said that some varieties of these flat-fishes have the power of changing their colour at discretion, so as exactly to match their surroundings.

But the strangest thing of all is how the symmetrical baby-face acquires that queer twist, and the ludicrous "thrawn" eyes. It seems that as soon as the fish takes to swimming on one side, in this absurd fashion, the eye on the under side resents being kept burrowing in the sand, so it deliberately starts on its independent travels, and first works its way forward, on the under side, and then gradually travels upwards, looking about it all the time, till it finds itself opposite the other eye, on the opposite side of the fish. This, at least, is the course pursued by the under eye in most cases. In one branch of this family, however, the wandering eye prefers

closing itself for awhile, and taking a short cut, straight through the head, reappearing at the opposite side, thence to take a fresh survey of the world. As its original mask and socket remain for awhile apparently unchanged, these fishes appear at this stage to be possessed of three eyes!

We spent an hour of delight in this beautiful natural aquarium, peering into every bright shallow pool, in search of new wonders. Then we turned inland, to a shady, quiet, happy nook among the silent grey rocks, with their beautiful ferns and grasses, and wild thyme and blue-bells—and here we enjoyed ourselves and our luncheon, as we could only do on such a day and in such a scene.

After awhile, my companions went off to call at a large farm, near to which are some remains of the old Fort of Dun Deirg, so called in memory of Dargo, the Druid,—so the people say. I first inspected the rough sheiling—half natural boulders of rock, half loose stones—where the salmon-fishers live; then idly, for lack of better occupation, wandered up a long grassy slope called Rhuna Brathrain, the Brother's Hill, or, as some say, Rhu-na-Bratan, the salmon's headland, from the fact that the beautiful silvery fish love to lie in the clear green water below, which accordingly yields the best fishing off the island.

Suddenly, as I reached the summit, such a scene burst on my astonished sight as left me fairly breathless with delight. The grassy slope, as I might have guessed, ended in an abrupt precipice, and right at my feet, far below, lay the clear calm sea, while from the shore, one huge basalt needle stood up level with the hill whereon I stood. All along the coast lay sunny bays, each inclosed by great masses of columnar basalt, always crowned with rich green pasture.

Right before me towered the Storr, a mountain of the same character as the Quiraing, rising almost perpendicularly from the sea, to a height of two thousand feet. Its smooth surface is clothed with rich green grass, while the rocky face which lies towards the sea is one mighty mass of broken crag. In every direction are heaped confused piles of rock, tossed about in forms gigantic and terrible, like the colossal ruins of some stupendous city, or the



burial-place of some race of giants ; a place utterly desolate and silent, where the spirits of the past may dwell undisturbed, in unbroken solitude, and where the floating vapour-wreaths that cling to the weird rock figures, seem like the ghostly winding-sheets of an army of mighty dead.

The autumn of 1872 added a new element of eeriness to this unearthly scene, for here was found the body of a poor young Englishman, who, wearying all too quickly of the cares and sorrows of earth, selected this lonely spot as the most fitting to put an end to the young life that weighed on him so heavily. His body was carried to Portree for burial, for, in Scotland, even the rash dead, who has fallen by his own hand, is not excluded from a resting-place in the kirkyard, but is laid, with unbaptized infants, in the cold shade on the north side of the church, to which he is carried head foremost, and is buried with his head to the east,—whereas all other dead are laid with their feet towards the rising of the sun. It seems, however, that such burials are liable to meet with opposition from the fishers, not from any special fear of the kirkyard being haunted, but from a belief that for seven years to come the herrings will forsake the coast ! In the present instance, whatever demur may have arisen, the funeral was suffered to proceed, and I have not heard that the harvest of the sea has suffered in consequence.

Still, the people do consider this a risk, and so, in various cases where, for peace' sake, they have suffered suicides to be buried in the kirkyard, they have returned secretly by night, dug up the corpse, and buried it on the shore, at low water mark. In other instances they have carried the body to the summit of some high mountain, out of sight of the sea, in the hope that the herring might not be scared. Such burials have occurred on the summit of Aird Dhubh, and also on a mountain bounding Inverness and Ross-shire. The latter was done two years after the original burial of a suicide on the shores of Loch Dhuig, in consequence of which the herring had left the coast. They were, however, appeased by this act, and returned to the loch.

The herring also deserted Loch Carron and Loch Alsh for some

time after two men had drowned themselves in these waters. In each case, the bodies had been washed ashore; after several years had elapsed, the fishers agreed that strong measures were necessary, so they kindled a great bonfire on the spot where each body had been found, as a sacrifice to the insulted herring.

High above this wilderness of grand pinnacles and tumbled crags, towers one gigantic rock-needle, poised as if in mid-air, on the summit of a great grass-covered crag. This is *par excellence* the Storr, a mighty monolith which bears an extraordinary resemblance to the double horn of a rhinoceros. Its height is 165 feet, its circumference at the base 240 feet, and as it cuts clear against the sky, like some vast minaret pointing heavenward from its rock pedestal a thousand feet above the sea, it becomes a landmark whereby the fishers may guide their course for many a mile; the only wonder is that it should not ere this have been in some way utilized as a vast natural lighthouse, a guide for the night as well as the day.

Beyond this magnificently wild scene lie the blue Cuchullin and Sconser Hills, and the little Isle of Raasay, with the wild coast of Applecross, Torridon, and Gairloch, as a background; and as I looked down on the calm waters, a few brown sails of far-away herring boats were all that recalled human life and toil.

Along the horizon lay soft, silvery grey clouds, all reflected in the water, while from the clear blue overhead came such a chorus of laverocks as seemed to bring floating back, pleasant memories of sweet home-voices singing joyous songs, to the blithesome "bird of the wilderness," soaring on dewy wing through downy clouds. When the larks had vanished sunward, there followed a hush and stillness of unutterable delight—a "silence more musical than any song," while the hot sunshine, pouring its flood of light on earth and sea, enfolded all nature in a dreamy, sleepy haze.

Looking forward to a delightful row homeward, I at last came down from my beautiful crag, losing sight of the sea for half-an-hour. To my dismay, I was met by my friends, who told me that a sudden change in the weather had set in, and on reaching the shore we found that a sharp breeze had sprung up, and long heavy waves were beating violently on the rocks. It was clearly impos-

sible for the boat to carry us in such a sea. The sailors, however, said that they could get her back to the yacht, if we could go round by land.

It was a weary six miles' walk, and we were pretty well tired already, but as there was no alternative, we just "set a stout heart to a stey brae," and clambering once more to the top of the cliffs, found there a tolerably level road, and faced the dull grey mist as cheerily as we could. We could see nothing else on every side of us; and every sheep we met was so magnified by the fog as to be suggestive of some ghostly monster. We passed by the desolate loch, sacred to all manner of wild fowl, which rose in wild alarm at our approach. Still, on and on, we trudged, through the soaking mist, with an ever-changing escort of curlews and plovers, circling round us with shrill angry whistle, till we were well past the homes of their little ones. Then a fresh colony took up the chorus of remonstrance, while the loveliest little baby peewits started almost from our feet, and ran off to hide in the tall sedgy grasses.

At last we reached the little Inn at Stencholl, and here my companions determined to spend the night; but as we were not expected, and neither rooms nor supper were ready, I preferred going on board to my own little cabin, so after getting good milk and scones, and a thorough drying at Sandy M'Leod's blazing peat fire, a very few minutes' rowing saw me safe on board the *Gannet*.

Next morning broke calm and beautiful. I went ashore, and found my companions none the worse for our expedition, though not inclined to repeat it. So I returned to our favourite bay, with its yellow gleaming sands,

"Where, 'mid the hush of slumberous ocean's roar,  
 . . . . . the silver tissued waves  
 Creep languidly along the basking shore."

A group of many-coloured rough Highland cattle had wandered down from the green hills, and were cooling themselves in the sea, and nibbling sea-weed; which I believe, in winter time, when other pasture is buried in snow, affords a livelihood to cattle<sup>1</sup> and sheep,

<sup>1</sup> One of the crofters at Barvas, in Lewis, in his evidence before the Royal

and sometimes even to deer. The sailors were filling our barrels at a spring of deliciously cool water, gurgling up from a cleft in the rock.

Beyond the blue sea lay the beautiful Ross-shire coast, every peak of the grand Torridon Hills standing out in clear relief. One in particular, a great cone of pure-white crystalline quartz, glittered in the sunlight as though covered with fresh snow. From Gairloch to beyond Applecross that magnificent mountain range lay unclouded—a perfect sea of peaks and cones and great shoulders—a grand tract of treeless deer-forest, in whose jealously guarded precincts lie hidden deep rocky corries, as wildly beautiful as, and practically far more inaccessible than, any Himalayan pass. Verily the cup of Tantalus was a perfect joke to the woes of an artist dwelling in a land of deer-stalkers, daily looking with ever-increasing longing at the barrier of great brown hills which inclose the paradise, one rapid glance at which still haunts his dreams, but where he may not again dare to set foot, under penalty of instant expulsion

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Commissioners, states : “ He had not to buy much fodder. They got fodder out of sea-ware. About £1 would cover all the fodder he paid for. The fodder they got from the sea was sea-ware, which the cattle and horses ate. The sheep would not take it. It was tangles they ate, and it was very good for them. The animals were very fond of it, and went to the sea-shore for it themselves. They had to be very careful in the spring, for if the cattle ate too much of it in the weak condition they then were in, they were apt to die. At such a time they were careful not to let them stray to the sea-shore, but they brought the ware to them and regulated the supply. Straw was the best fodder to give with the sea-ware.”

On the other hand, another crofter states : “ There is a great deal of difference between one of our cows and an Aberdeenshire beast. The latter would outweigh three of ours. All the food with which we have to winter our stirks we bring from Glasgow ; and, on a pinch, we give them the meal with which we should feed our families. We feed the stirks with the meal, and pay for the meal with the stirks.

Nor is the meal the only item of what should be “ the children’s meat,” which has to be given to the beasts. “ Are the eggs ever given to the calves ? A.—Yes, when they are young, and their mothers have no milk, on account of the poverty of their feeding, eggs are given to them. Our cows are just like Pharaoh’s lean kine, owing to the inferior nature of the pasture.”

by a whole army of vigilant foresters, backed by grim laws of trespass.

To the southern ear this use of the word forest always sounds a strange misnomer ; and the raw Saxon who ventures to wonder at the absence of trees is apt to be rather startled at first by such a posing reply as " Trees ! wha ever heard of trees in a forest ? " Nevertheless, when, for the satisfaction of our Sassenach friends, we refer them to their beloved Dr. Johnson, we find he defines forest as a word descriptive of " any untilled tract of ground." You see he had been in the north-country himself, and knew all about it. If lack of tillage be all that is required to constitute a forest, there is not much fear of those wild hills ever losing their rank as such.

In those deep corries lie unnumbered treasures for fern-lovers. The delicate parsley fern grows there in rich abundance ; and there are sheltered nooks by the sea where the tall *Osmunda Regalis* flourishes undisturbed.

" Fair ferns and flowers, and chiefly that tall fern  
So stately, of the Queen *Osmunda* named."

That wild coast still keeps legends of its early Christian days, and tells how, just twelve hundred years ago, St. Maelruhba, who, like Columba, was descended from Niel of the Nine Hostages, King of Ireland—and like him, too, was a most zealous convert to the new faith—sailed over the sea from Bangor, and (A.D. 673) landing at Aber-crosen (the mouth of the Crosen), now known as Applecross, there founded a church and monastery, which received the name of Comaraich, the Sanctuary, and was acknowledged as a haven of refuge for criminals and debtors, a privilege which I believe it could claim to this day.

On the little isle of Croulin, near Applecross, was Maelruhba's oratory—and other memorials of his missionary wanderings remain in various parts of the country, where he is remembered as Malruba, Malru, Mourie, or Maree. He was patron saint of the south-eastern half of Skye, the remainder of the isle being under the care of St. Columba. To him were dedicated the churches of Kilmoray in

Brackadale, Kilmaree in Strath, and Aski-Malruby, commonly called Killashig. The parish of Kilarrow in Islay was also his, and though its church has wholly disappeared, a few carved slabs still mark the old kirkyard.

In his honour beautiful Loch Maree is said to have changed its ancient name as an arm of Loch Ewe. The farm of Kinloch Ewe, at the head of the fresh-water Loch Maree, still retains the original name, though now some miles distant from its salt-water god-mother; a fact which, taken in connection with the different levels of these lakes, seems to point to some very curious topographical change.

One of the many islands on Loch Maree, commonly called Eilean Mowrie, or Malruba's Isle, became a favourite retreat of the saint; and his tiny chapel, burial-ground, and small well, are still held by the people in such veneration, that they resort thither to bathe, and drink, and hang up rags and other offerings on the bushes. An oak tree close to the well is studded with hundreds of nails, by which scraps of clothing of patients were attached to it, and a number of pence and halfpence were driven sideways into the bark, which gradually closed over them.

Tradition tells that in pagan days there was a very sacred temple on this Isle, and till very recently this Holy Well retained the property of curing madness, at such times as the waters were full. Should they be low, it was a sign that the spirit of the well was unpropitious, and the waters had no such power. The well, which is now dry, lies near the shores of the lake.

It is a pleasant little heathery isle, and on its highest ground, in a thicket of oak and holly, rowan and juniper, dog-roses and honeysuckle, are the ruins of a very small chapel in a circular enclosure—a very low wall almost buried by earth and turf. It is supposed that this was the original place of Pagan worship, and that the saint tried to Christianize it, by there placing his chapel. But his disciples probably only deemed him an incarnation of their deity, for to this day the people of the neighbourhood call him the god Mourie. Around the chapel there are many moss-grown graves—plain unhewn stones. Only two bear

any sort of carving, namely, two well-defined crosses on flat slabs, which are otherwise untouched by the hand of the stone-cutter.

These mark the graves of a Norwegian princess and her lover, to whose sad history the well owes its healing power. The lady had come to Inch Maree to meet him at the chapel of the saint who was to bestow on them the blessing of Holy Church. The bridegroom had promised that on arriving at Poolewe he would hoist a white flag to tell of his safety. But alas! by way of a hateful practical joke, he ran up a black flag, and his true love, never doubting that he was dead, then and there went "clean demented." She lived a few years as a sorrowing lunatic, and when she died, and was buried on the Isle, the waters became endowed with miraculous powers. Her heart-broken lover did not long survive her, and soon was laid at her feet. The stones lie end to end, pointing eastward.

Violent lunatics seem to have had rather a rough time of it. The approved method of conveying them was very much like that of leading a mad bull to the slaughter. A strong rope was fastened round his waist, and a couple of powerful men taking each end, two led the way, and the others followed. Thus "in stays" he was led to the loch, placed in the boat, and rowed round the island, being at intervals jerked into the water. They were then led to the holy tree, into which they drove a nail, or a coin, and fastened a rag. Thence passing to the little well, they drank of its sacred waters, and made a second offering, after which they were rowed thrice *sunwise* round the loch, in which they were made to bathe three times.

This ceremony was repeated daily for several weeks, by which time the feverish madness was often pretty well cured; and so firmly did the people believe in the power of St. Maree (Malruba), that his name was the most solemn oath by which they swore. All went well, till one evil day, when, alas! a farmer from Letter-Ewe, whose favourite dog had gone mad, brought it here to drink. The dog was cured, but the angry and very unsympathetic spirit of the well departed for ever. The man whose presumption wrought this mischief himself went mad; but he tested the waters in vain;

their virtue had gone from them, never to return, nor have they ever again risen to their former level. Whether this miracle had any connection with certain deep drainage cuttings made at that time, I leave sceptics to determine. Happily the waters of the lake are still available, for the pilgrims who continue to visit the lake, though less frequently and more secretly than of yore.

Malruba is said to have been slain near Conan Bridge, on the 21st April, A.D. 722, and his body was carried to his monastery at Aber-crosen, beside the sea, where a grey stone, in a thicket of brambles, marks his tomb.

There, in the centre of an old circle of stones, is a noted perforated stone, "*quherein the people tryed the entering of their head.*" It is similar to one in the Druidic circle on Mauchrie Moor in Arran. Perhaps Mauchrie and Mourie were originally identical—the inference is rather in favour of the worship here offered having been to "Mourie, the demon," than to "Malruba, the saint." (Such perforated stones, we know, were often deemed sacred. We noticed one at Kil-Couslan in Cantyre. Small ones were strung on a red thread, and worn as amulets, or were tied to the key of the stable-doors to prevent witches from riding the horses at night. And the most notable of all perforated stones was that through which lovers plighted their troth, at the Standing Stones of Stennis.)

So we must assume that Maelruhba, like other early Celtic saints, strove to engraft Christianity on earlier superstitions.

Zealous as he was in teaching the people, he does not seem to have been altogether successful, for in the year 1656 we find the ecclesiastical authorities endeavouring to stop the annual sacrifice of bulls on the 25th of August to St. Mourie, "whoever he might be, saint or demon." This recipient of dubious honour was, in fact, poor Malruba himself. The people also *carried milk to the tops of the high mountains, and there poured it out upon the rocks as an oblation.* The Presbytery records that not only were the people of Appilcross *accustomed TO SACRIFICE BULLS* to St. Mourie *as they call him*, but also "Miurie has his monuments and remembrances in the parishes of Loch Carron, Loch Alse, Kintaile, Contan, Fottertie, and Loch Broome."



The Presbytery was much troubled at the impossibility of checking these heathenish offerings, which they found were also made at Gairloch and Loch Mourie, and so late as 1678 the records tell of the custom of "sacrificing of beests in ane heathenish manner" on the 25th of August, on the island of St. Rufus, commonly called Ellan Moury, in Lochew. Again, they tell of "the Ile Mourie, Quherein are monuments of Idolatrie," where "Mourie his devilans" receive worship.

Evidently Mourie's worshippers were not ashamed of their evil deeds, for the records add, "*They ownes thease titles, and receaves the sacrifices and offerings upon the accompt of Mourie his poore ones.*"

It is noted in the Presbytery record, that Hector Mackenzie, as also his sons John-Murdoch and Duncan, and Kenneth his grandson, had thus sacrificed a bull, for the recovering of the health of Cirstane Mackenzie, spouse to the said Hector, who was "formerlie sicke and valetudinarie." Consequently "The brithren, taking to their consideratione the abhominations within the parochin of Gairloch, in *sacrificing of beasts* upon the 25 August, *as also in pouring of milk upon hills as oblationes*, desire the minister to have searchers and tryers in everie corner of the countrey, especiallie about the Loch Mourie." These were to summon all offenders to appear before the Presbytery, and to warn "such as heve boats about the loch, not to transport themselves or uthers to the Ile of Mourie, without warrand from the minister for lawful ends."

"And for thease that comes *from forren countreyis*, that the ministers of Garloch and Loch Carron informe themselves of the names of thease, and the places of their residence."

The dubious hereditary honour of these propitiatory sacrifices was accorded to various Christian saints in various parts of the British Isles. Reginald de Coldingham tells how in 1164, a bull, the marvel of the parish for its strength and ferocity, was dragged to the Kirche of Cuthbriht (Kirkcudbright), and offered as an alms and oblation to St. Cuthbert.

Another writer tells how, in 1589, he witnessed the accustomed sacrifice of a bullock to St. Beyno, patron saint of Clynnog in Caernarvonshire.

Strange hints of the ancient faith also reveal themselves dimly through the traditions which relate to the principal churches dedicated to St. Michael (just as on some old palimpsest the curious scholar discerns faint traces of the characters first inscribed thereon, and but partially erased by the later scribe). In Southern Italy, as in Armorica, the churches of St. Michael were generally erected beside some healing fountain, and some tradition of a sacred mystic bull, blends with the legend of the Archangel.

Akin to these traces of the old pagan superstitions was the custom of sacrificing a bull as an offering to the earth spirits, in time of any grievous cattle-plague. *The latest instance on record of this offering having actually been made occurred at Dallas, in Morayshire, on my father's estate, somewhere about A.D. 1850.* A murrain having decimated the herd of a small farmer, he proceeded to kindle the Need-fire with all ceremony ; then, having dug a pit, he therein sacrificed an ox to some spirit unknown !

This Need-fire, or Fire-churn—that is to say, fire kindled by friction of dry wood—was deemed a charm against all manner of disease, but especially against cattle-plague.

Though the ceremony of producing it varied in detail, it has been practised by nearly all Indo-European races. That which was procured from striking metal was considered worthless.

Among the various accounts of Highland customs, which in the year 1830 were spoken of as still quite common, was the kindling of this Need-fire in any case of murrain, or cattle disease. A small booth was erected near some river or loch, in which divers wooden posts, upright and horizontal, were placed : the horizontal timber was provided with several spokes, by means of which it was rapidly turned round, till, by its friction with the other posts, it became ignited.

The men who turned the spokes were obliged to divest themselves of any metal they might have about them, in conformity with that curious feature in all magic, or fairy lore, which makes the presence of steel or iron utterly neutralize all spiritual influences.

In all the Celtic fairy tales, we find that the touch of a dirk deprives the “good folk” of all power, so that to lay cold steel on

one fairy-bound, would release him from the spell. Therefore it was, doubtless, that the Druids cut their sacred mistletoe with golden sickles; and for the same reason, their descendants to this present day go forth on May morning to gather ivy and other plants, which must not be cut by any knife. (It is worthy of note that the same superstition exists among the Africans of the Gold Coast, who, to this day, deem it necessary when consulting their Fetish, to remove their knives, and any other ornament of steel or iron.)

The Need-fire having been kindled, all other fires about the farm were put out, and relighted from this one, and all the cattle were made to smell it; sometimes the sick animals were made to stand over the fire for a quarter of an hour with their tongues out. According to the original custom, the sacrifice of a heifer was necessary to the salvation of the herd.

Sir James Simpson told me of two occasions on which this ceremony was observed within the memory of the present and past generation; one was at Biggar in Lanarkshire, the other near Torphichen in West Lothian, within twenty miles of Edinburgh; at the latter, a near relative of Sir James was present. *In each case an unhappy cow was buried alive as a sacrifice* to the Spirit of the Murrain, in the hope that the rest of the flock might thereby be saved!

I am told that there have been various instances in the present century in which bulls have been sacrificed in England. One such case was the offering of a calf in Cornwall, in the year 1800, to arrest a murrain; and the Rev. J. Evans, describing Wales in the year 1812, says that whenever a violent disease broke out among the horned cattle, the farmers of the district joined to give up a bullock to be offered as a ransom for the herds. It was led to the top of a precipice and thence cast down; the ceremony being known as "casting a captive to the devil."

Somewhat similar is the annual sacrifice in Brittany of an ox, a cow, a calf, and a sheep, which, being gaily adorned with flowers and ribbons, are led in procession round the church with music of drums and fifes, and flags flying. These animals are then sold for

the benefit of St. Nicodemus, to induce him to protect all other flocks and herds in the district.

In olden days it was currently believed that this offering of a life for a life, was equally efficacious in the case of human beings, as in that of animals. Hence we read strange stories of witchcraft, whereby men or women sought to redeem their own lives by the sacrifice of another human life, or else when they "laid their sickness" on some animal—cat, dog, or sheep; and it was firmly believed that this modern scapegoat would straightway vanish and never again be seen.

Again, at the Stones of Carnac in Brittany there is a great autumn pilgrimage (or *pardon*) in honour of St. Carnely. All the peasants assemble to crave his blessing on their cattle. After church service they march in procession to his holy fountain, and then round the village. In dead silence, they slowly march round the church, and kneel before the image of St. Carnely, *which stands between two oxen*. Then silently and solemnly they go back to the Holy Well, where they kneel, drink, bathe their faces, and then raise their hands heavenward, that the holy water may trickle down their arms.

When there is sickness in a herd, all the cattle of a homestead are assembled by night, and driven to Carnac slowly, in strict silence, often from long distances. They are driven processionally round the church, then thrice sunwise round the Holy Well, where they are sprinkled with its sacred water. They are then led home, but not a word must be spoken, or the charm is broken.

Near the stones there is a green hillock crowned with a small chapel, and dedicated to St. Michael. But on the summit of this hill there is an ancient tumulus, on which every Midsummer Eve the people kindle a great bonfire. It is called *tan-heol* (the fire of the sun), and is intended for the good of the cattle, which are made to pass through the smoke and across the fires. In excavating near the foot of this hillock, a small old Roman bronze bull was found, and the peasants at once exclaimed, "Voilà le Saint Carnely!"

As regards the kindling of the Need-fire, Shaw, the historian of

Morayshire, writing at the end of last century, mentions having frequently been present at this fire-making, and adds that a great cauldron was set on this forced fire (*teine eigin*), wherein juniper was boiled, and the *bree* sprinkled on the cattle. Juniper was also burnt in the cattle stalls, that its fumes might keep away the witches. Possibly it may have acted as a disinfectant.

It was also customary to burn juniper before the cattle on New Year's Day, and to adorn the cow-byres with sprigs of rowan, *i. e.* mountain ash, which must be tied above the door, with a red thread, as it is well known that

“Rowan-tree and Red thread  
Mak' the witches tyne their speed.”

Any person curious in these matters may still discover in our midst many lingering traces of quaint old Paganisms. I confess that to me, in these days of humdrum common-sense, they have a charm like that of some wild-berry wine—a gamey flavour in short, recalling the days when the mainland, and probably even these islands, were covered with dense primeval forests, wherein wild deer, and wild men, and stately Druid priests, found home and shelter, and where our ancestors worshipped Baal, the sun-god, with strange, mysterious rites, mostly connected with fire and with the gathering of sacred plants; where, on the great Festivals of the Sun, the priests kindled fire by friction, and all the people carried it to their cottages, where it was never suffered to go out, but, as now, smouldered on, night and day, except when purposely extinguished to make room for the new Holy Fire.

From these dreamy legends of the distant hills I was roused by the sound of footsteps, which in that silent spot was somewhat of a rarity. Looking up, I perceived that there was a gathering of the fisher folk, for from every side of the hills I could see groups of people approach, all making for this very spot, till two or three hundred had assembled; and I found that all the fisher lads were to start in the afternoon for the herring fishery on the east coast, and their sweethearts and wives, and old fathers and mothers, and little brothers and sisters, had all come down to see them off.

At first it was a scene of very cheery greetings, for many of them live far apart, and rarely "foregather." But as the hour for parting drew near, it became sadder and sadder, and the amount of kissing and crying told pretty plainly how well they knew the dangers and perils that might arise within the two or three months that the fishing would last. For many a sad fireside has its own sore history of the Caller Herrin', and can tell too sad a tale of why "wives and mithers, 'maist despairin', ca' them lives o' men."<sup>1</sup>

And though the sea to-day was literally without a ripple, we were reminded of its angrier moods by the great masts and ribs of an unhappy ship with which the whole bay was strewn, she having been dashed to pieces on these rocks some time previously.

For old ocean has not forgotten what merry games it played in olden days, when the Norwegian galleys that had swept down so proudly on the Scottish shore were dashed to pieces by the wild storms on these Western Isles, and when

"On Lorn and Mull and Skye  
The hundred ships of Haco  
In a thousand fragments lie."

And his own royal galley, shorn and shattered, could hardly reach that bleak Orcadian coast where the brave Norseman only purposed to spend the winter, but where it had been decreed that he should sleep his last sleep, amid stern warriors and drowned fishers.

Such of his fleet as had weathered the storm, stood right away for Norway, so the king had but a little band around him when his last sickness overtook him. When he knew that he was nigh unto death he arose, and being taken to St. Magnus' Kirk, *he made a*

<sup>1</sup> As I revise these pages, tidings reach me of terrible disaster having befallen the fishing fleet of Hull, in the wild storm of the 22nd March, 1883. With the dark dawn of Good Friday came the dread news that twenty-three boats would return no more—a dread which deepened to conviction as the slow hours wore on, and brought no tidings from the sea. So in that one awful night 135 fishermen from this one port perished, leaving 60 widows and 150 fatherless children.

And but a little while has elapsed since another awful gale swept the coast of Berwick, and left one large fishing village literally without a breadwinner. All were drowned—only women and children remaining.

*sunwise* turn round the shrine of the sainted Earl Magnus. A few nights later he died. His body, richly apparelled, and crowned with flowers, was laid in a hall lighted with great tapers, and thence borne to St. Magnus' Kirk, and buried near the shrine of the great yarl.

But Haco's dying command had been that he should be carried back to Norway and laid beside his fathers. So in the spring, his body was taken on board that great ship of oak, with the twenty banks of oars, and all the dragons' heads carved and gilt; the same ship in which he had sailed so gallantly from his own land. After many days the great ship reached Bergen, and all the royal family came forth to meet the funeral train, and with them all Haco's warriors, and a vast concourse of people who came to witness his burial in Christ Kirk. So there the brave sea-king was laid in the year of grace 1263. But the men of the Isles, while they mourned the death of their valiant foe, rejoiced in the mighty bulwark of hidden reefs and breakers that had proved so sure a defence against the invader.

This day, however, the clear sunshine and calm sea gave no hint of any danger being in store. One by one the heavily-laden boats started; some with as many as thirty lads on board; half of whom would help to man the Ross-shire boats, and then fish the coast wherever the shoals might lead them. Fine strapping young fellows they were, for the most part,—lads of whom the sobbing lasses on the shore might well be proud. They reminded me of an islander's comment on a certain Scriptural biography. "Ou! she was a stout lad, Sampson; sure she cam' frae Skye!"

Away they sailed over the smooth waters; and though their rich brown sails were hoisted, it needed all their rowing power as well, to make a fair start. So we wished them luck with all our hearts, and that

"Weel might the keel row, that earns the bairnie's bread."

Stornoway is one of the chief stations in the Outer Hebrides where boats congregate for the early herring fishery. They come over from the mainland, or the Inner Isles, to where they know the

fish will first appear, and all along the Lews, Loch Boisdale, and Barra there are regular stations, where the treasures of the deep are landed to be cured and packed for market.

Perhaps as many as 1500 boats may assemble at these ports, each boat averaging a crew of six men and perhaps a boy, making 10,000 souls; the fish-curers, gutters, and labourers amounting to fully 20,000 more. A vast multitude are these "toilers of the sea," and in a good season they are well remunerated. For instance, in the spring of 1870, the May and June fisheries realized £120,000.

After this, the shoals move onward to the east coast—and the boats must follow wherever they lead—as far probably as Aberdeen, where, in general, they are at once hired by the fish-curers, for whom they work. But, as a sample of the changes and chances which affect the trade, I may mention that during the French and Prussian war they found, on reaching their destination, that the usual immense export of herrings to the Baltic was an impossibility, so the majority of the boats could get no engagement at all; some of those already working, found no market for their silvery ware, and had to throw them back into the sea. And so, in the height of the fishing season, the boats returned home poorer than they started, many of those passing through the Caledonian Canal on their return to the Isles being unable even to pay the lock dues.

In 1882 they had equally hard luck; not for lack of market, but for lack of fish, for the herring were capricious, and played a winning game at hide and seek—a point noted in the report of the Highland Railway, which, under this head, notes a falling off of freight to the value of £1243 in the half-year. It also notes the total failure of the sprat fishery, usually so good at Inverness and along the east coast, the total tonnage being only 49 tons, compared with 1841 tons the previous year, which implies a loss to the railway of freight of upwards of £2100!

Among the men who still lingered on the shore were several who in old days had accompanied one of my brothers<sup>1</sup> in dangerous bird's-nesting expeditions, when their strong arms had helped to

<sup>1</sup> Roualeyn Gordon Cumming.



lower him by ropes over cliffs and rocky ledges where the osprey and golden eagle had made their nests. These men one by one came up, in their kind rough way, each with some loving word to tell of “him that’s awa’” (as they say)—and for whose sake I found such genuine kindness wherever I wandered on these wild coasts. Kind hearts they are in truth. Leal to those whom they deem worthy of honour. And, as we have well proven, in times of trouble, and in the hour of death, they can be gentle and tender, watching by a sick-bed with a patient unwearied love passing the love of woman. All honour be to such true metal, in however rough a mould it may be cast.

### THE SUNDAY WAR.

The beginning of June 1883 furnishes a very remarkable study of sundry characteristics of the Isles. Towards the close of May the Hebridean shores were visited by vast shoals of herring. The fishers from the east coast, ever on the alert, captured such enormous quantities that the market was glutted, and the fish-curiers were positively unable to take them off their hands. On Saturday, June 2nd, two steamers were loaded at Stornoway (Isle of Lewis) with fresh and kippered herring, and despatched to the railway terminus at Ströme Ferry (Isle of Skye), whence a special Sunday train was to convey these “perishable goods” to Inverness to catch the south trains.

This, however, was not to be. The men of Lewis, now effectually stirred up by sundry agitators to the consideration of their “grievances,” could not spare time to secure their share of the bountiful Heaven-sent supply. They were busy preparing for a great “demonstration” at Stornoway, at which all their wrongs—real and imaginary—were set forth at full length, and thus two precious days were wasted, while the east-coast boats were reaping an abundant harvest. The next day was Saturday, which comes so near Sunday that they could not think of launching their boats till Monday (by which time the herring would probably be gone). So they stayed on land bewailing their poverty, and letting the remedy slip away from their grasp.

Equally remarkable was the scene enacted at Strome Ferry on the arrival of the fish-laden steamers at about 1 a.m. on Sunday morning. The railway servants, numbering about a dozen men, at once commenced to transfer the fish to the railway waggons, but soon learnt that the fishers had resolved to put a stop to such "Sabbath desecration." Whether this determination was a spontaneous outburst of genuine Puritanism, or whether it was inspired by jealousy of the more energetic men who had reaped their neglected harvest, is hard to say, but it is certain that they acted in obedience to some general summons, for the Company's servants had scarcely begun their work, when a body of about fifty fishers from the immediate neighbourhood assembled, and announced their resolution to prevent this unlawful Sabbath work.

As their words were ignored, they seized the man in charge of the steam crane, dragging him violently away, and effectually stopping its work. Later, the railway porters endeavoured to discharge the cargo by hand, whereupon the fishers pushed the waggons away, and, their numbers being now augmented to about 150 men, mostly armed with stout sticks, they fairly drove the railway men off the pier,—not without a very serious scrimmage. All the morning fresh boat-loads of these rigid Sabbatarians continued to arrive from all parts of the coast, evidently deeming their own action a display of most righteous zeal. Entreaties, remonstrances, arguments were all in vain. A small body of police arrived from Dingwall in the forenoon, but found themselves quite unable to cope with the Puritanic mob, who could see no Sabbath-breaking in their own act of rowing across Loch Carron to molest peaceful railway servants in the discharge of their duty! It is said that two hundred men crossed the hill from Lochalsh district, and spent the night signalling by fires to the men in boats on the loch. So the fishers held their ground and guarded the pier till midnight, when, the Sabbath being ended, they allowed work to proceed, and the fish finally reached the London market, considerably deteriorated in value.

Were this principle to be faithfully carried out, it is obvious

that the men of the Outer Isles must give up all thought of fishing for the market on Friday and Saturday, as their cargoes would be left to decay at Strome Ferry !

After all this excitement we may safely assume that the Sabbatarian party did not obey the injunction to labour on the first of the “six days,” and that Monday’s shoals did not suffer at their hands ! Indeed the greater part of the week was devoted to arranging a plan of action for the following Saturday night, when the rioters were resolved to muster in much larger numbers, and so put an effectual stop to this “Sabbath breaking” by the railway authorities.

These, however, took active measures for the repression of such interference. A body of about two hundred police was brought together from various districts, so far south as Lanark, and assembled at Strome Ferry. A detachment of troops was also despatched from Edinburgh to Fort George, where a special train was in readiness to convey them to the scene of action, should their presence be required.

Late on Saturday night the Sabbatarian party mustered in force, and great excitement prevailed. Happily the clergy of the district, who had hitherto been absent at the General Assembly in Edinburgh, arrived in time to counsel the people to disperse without creating any further disturbance ; and their words, combined with the awe-inspiring presence of so large a police force, induced the crowd to return to their boats about midnight.

About ten of the ringleaders were arrested, and were treated as martyrs to the good cause.

A few days later a large meeting was held on the sea-shore at Strome Ferry, presided over by a considerable number of the clergy and elders of the Free Church from neighbouring districts, to demonstrate that Sunday work is contrary to the established law of Scotland, which orders that the Sabbath shall be kept free from work. Parallels were drawn between the demonstration at Strome Ferry and the action of Nehemiah (chap. xiii. 15), and resolutions were passed to resist to the uttermost all attempts to authorize any such evil-doing in their midst. It was resolved that funds should

be collected for the defence of the young men who had been apprehended. One of the reverend speakers declared "that he could authoritatively say, on behalf of many in Inverness and the north generally, that they approved of the stand the men had made against the work carried on at Strome on Sunday. He knew that it would not be allowed to go on in any other place except there, and the company was taking advantage of the people of the district."

## CHAPTER VII.

## MODERN CHIPS OF THE OLD BLOCKS.

“There’s something in that ancient superstition  
Which, erring as it is, our fancy loves.”

Holy Wells in the Hebrides and in the Highlands—Prohibitory Statutes—Wells for the Cure of Insanity—Pilgrim’s Rags—Traces of Sun and Fire Worship—Four great Festivals—Beltane—Midsummer in Ireland, Isle of Man, Stonehenge—Hallow-e’en—All Souls—Yule—Christmas—The Burning of the Clavie—Dread of giving or taking Fire—Festivals in the Pyrenees, the Alps, the Baltic, in Paris, in Edinburgh and London—Traces of Moon Worship—An Owl’s Question.

I SPOKE just now of the Holy Well of Malruba or Mourie—Saint or Demon—as one having peculiar interest.

It is, however, only one of many sacred springs, which to this day are held in some sort of superstitious reverence, dimly recalling the days when the people there assembled to worship the Celtic Goddess of Waters.

Various places both on the mainland and in the Hebrides, still bear her name of Neith or Nait; Annat burn and Annat glen in Perthshire; the Tempul-na-Anait in Skye, and the Tabir-na-Annait, or Well of Neith, in the little island of Calligray belonging to Harris, where the worshippers purified themselves before proceeding to the Teampull-na-Annait, close by—the ruins of the old Christian Chapel, retaining the name of the heathen goddess.

Pennant, writing in the last century, says that in the Isle of

Skye he found traces of four temples of Anait; one of these was near Dunvegan. In each case they were built at the spot where two rivers met, a stone wall extending from stream to stream, so as to form with the two waters a triangle, in the centre of which stood the ruins of the temple.

One far-famed fountain lies at the foot of the great rock-mountain of Quiraing, where, sheltered by the greenest of grassy hills, are the clear crystalline springs of Loch Shiant, whose bright waters gleam over a bed of pure sand, and are still considered a specific for all manner of diseases. Pilgrimages are still sometimes made here, and the usual turn sunwise must be made thrice before drinking, after which some small offering is laid down for the guardian spirit of the well. Formerly, though the rivulet and the loch were alike full of fish, no one would presume to touch them; they were, in fact, esteemed as sacred as those holy fishes which fatten in the tanks of Himalayan temples, and which rise mockingly to stare at hungry travellers.

Close by the loch there still remains some low brushwood, marking where formerly a copse of larger bushes flourished, which, even a hundred years ago, were held in such reverence that no one might venture to break a twig from their branches. This probably was the latest trace of the tree-worship once commonly practised in these isles.

It is somewhat singular that this phase of idolatry should have died out so wholly in all Christianized countries, while water, fire, and stones retained so strong a hold on the reverence of the people. Vainly did the Council at Arles, in A.D. 452, decree that "if in any diocese any infidel either lighted torches *or worshipped trees, fountains, or stones*, he should be found guilty of sacrilege." Vainly did divers other Councils again and again repeat the same warning, especially forbidding the lighting of torches and offering candles and other gifts to these three sacred powers. Vainly, too, did King Edgar and Canute the Great forbid the *barbarous adoration of the sun and moon, fire and fountains, stones, and all kinds of trees and wood*; still the people clung with tenacity to all their varied forms of paganism, except the worship of trees, which seems

gradually to have been forgotten, or only remembered in Germany, whence we have borrowed the Yule custom of illuminating a fir-tree with offerings of candles.

Gregory of Tours, writing in the sixth century, shows that woods, waters, birds, and beasts, were still commonly worshipped. Pope Gregory III., in 740, prohibited the Germans from offering sacrifices and consulting auguries beside the fountains in sacred groves. And so late as A.D. 1102, St. Anselm issued commands in London, forbidding well-worship.

In Ireland the difficulty was solved by dedicating the wells to saints, whose votaries still deposit a rag or a pin, to represent the more precious offerings of olden days. But it is strange indeed to find the very same custom still lingering in this land of sturdy common sense, and to find that divers wells and lochs are still supposed to have miraculous powers of healing.

For instance, there is a loch in Strath Naver in Sutherland, to which people constantly resort for all manner of cures. They must walk backwards into the water, take their dip, and leave a small coin as an offering. Then without looking round they must walk straight back to the land, and so, right away from the loch.

St. Ronan's Well, near the Butt of Lewis, is one to which lunatics are occasionally brought from many parts of the north-western Highlands. Very near to it is a small ruin, evidently of very great antiquity, which is Christianized as the Temple of St. Molochus, or Mulvay, or Molonah, but which the people often call simply the Teampull-mor, *i. e.* "The Great Temple" (a title which, considering its size, could only have referred to its sanctity). Patients are required to *walk seven times round the temple*. Then they are sprinkled with water brought from St. Ronan's Well in a stone cup, which is in the hereditary care of a family whose ancestor was "clerk of the temple."

After the sprinkling the sufferer is bound, and laid for the night on the site of the ancient altar. Should he sleep, it is a sure earnest of his recovery; but should he be wakeful, then further effort is considered useless.

In a churchyard on Loch Torridon there is a well where, for

centuries, *three stones have been perpetually whirling round and round*. All manner of illnesses have been cured by carrying one of these stones in a bucket of water to the patient, who touched the stone, after which it was carried back to its usual place, and began whirling as usual. But one day, a foolish woman carried home one of them in her bucket to heal a sick goat, and when it was put back, it would no longer whirl, but sank to the bottom of the well, where it has lain quietly ever since.

All these well-stories seem to prove the spirits terribly prone to take offence. I told you how St. Malruba's well lost all healing virtue, since the day when a mad dog was dipped into it. Another spring which was held in especial reverence was the Tonbir Knabir in Islay, literally the locomotive well, so called because it was originally in Isle Colonsay; but one day a rash woman was guilty of washing her hands in it, whereupon it instantly dried up, and transported its waters to Islay, whence it was henceforth honoured with *Deisul* processions, and small offerings were made to its tutelary spirit.

At Broadford in Skye there is a well in the churchyard, near to which used to hang a bell, that rang supernaturally about once a week. No human bell-ringer had any hand in producing the wild chimes that rang out so loud and clear that they could be heard for miles, giving warning to all the sick folk to come to the healing waters and be made whole. But a new power at last interfered (minister or steward), and the bell was removed, since which time the virtue of the well is gone, and the people are left to the tender mercies of a human leech.

St. Catherine's well and chapel in the Isle of Eigg were also treated with much reverence. So was that at Sleat in the Isle of Skye.

One loch in Ross-shire is still said to cure deafness, and the neighbours told me of one man who had undoubtedly recovered his hearing by judicious adherence to the letter of the law; thrice he had walked backwards into the water, and thrice returned to land without looking round. Their admiration of the cure was somewhat damped by the fact of the man's death within a year. The



well at Craig-Howe in Ross-shire also cures deafness, and receives large stores of clouts, pins, and coins.

In the parish of Avock, in the Black Isles (facing Inverness), is a well called Craiguck, or Craigie Well, probably from the dark crag rising behind it. On the first Sunday in May (old style) all the people from far and near gather here at daybreak—a regular hearty Highland gathering—as merry as a fair, all exchanging kindly greetings and good wishes for the health of the coming year, in good broad Scotch, in Gaelic, or in such pure English as we rarely hear from the poor in any part of Britain, save here, where it is an acquired tongue. The health, of course, is to be secured by a draught of the lucky well. But they must get their drink before the sun rises. Once he climbs the horizon the spell is broken, so, as the last moments draw near, the eager pressing forward for a taste amounts to a downright scramble.

A stranger, whose curiosity induced him to go forth betimes and witness this curious scene, tells how “some drank out of dishes, some stooped on their knees to drink, the latter being occasionally plunged over head and ears by their companions.” As the first rays of the sun appeared a man was seen coming down the brae in great haste. He was recognized as “Jock Forsyth,” a very honest and pious, but eccentric individual. Scores of voices shouted, “You are too late, Jock. The sun is rising. Surely you have slept in this morning.”

The new-comer, a middle-aged man, perspiring profusely, and out of breath, nevertheless pressed through the crowd and never stopped till he reached the well. Then, muttering a few inaudible words, he stooped on his knees and took a large draught. Then he rose and said, “O Lord, Thou knowest that weel would it be for me this day, an’ I had stoopit my knees and my heart before Thee in spirit and in truth, as often as I have stoopit them afore this well. But we maun keep the customs of our fathers.” So he stepped aside among the rest and dedicated his offering to the briar bush, which by this time could hardly be seen through the number of shreds which covered it.

For part of the ceremony is that each comer must hang a shred

of cloth on a large briar bush, which grows close by the well, as an offering to the healing and luck-conferring waters, forcibly reminding the beholder of those holy wells and bushes in the Emerald Isle, were many coloured rags flutter in the breeze; poor Paddy's votive offerings to the blessed St. Somebody on behalf of sick parent or child.

Strange, is it not, that this custom should be so widely spread? We find it at Constantinople, where each pilgrim ties a shred torn from his own raiment to the carved windows of saintly tombs; and it is religiously observed by the Mohammedan pilgrims visiting the Mosque of Omar at Jerusalem, beneath the great dome of which lies that huge rock whence Mohammed ascended to heaven, supposed to be the identical rock whereon Abraham did not sacrifice Isaac. This rock is surrounded by a great iron railing, adorned with thousands of rags, tied up by the pilgrims as reminders to the Prophet. Indeed, strips of old cloth seem to be a recognized medium of communication with the spirit-world in all corners of the globe, for in our Eastern wanderings we found many a gaily-decorated shrub in the lonely Himalayan glens and passes, which, in the distance, seemed to be loaded with blossoms, but which on closer approach proved to be laden with bright morsels of rag, the simple offerings of the Hill-men to the spirit of some tree or well.

In Ceylon also, where we spent a lovely moonlight night on the summit of Adam's Peak, the "Holy Mount" of Buddhists, Sivaïtes, and Mohammedans, we noted the multitude of rags tied to the iron chains which prevent the roof of the temple, covering the holy footprint, from being blown away. The poor pilgrims believe that a shred of their raiment, thus offered, will surely prevent Buddha from forgetting them and their vows. On these superstitious customs in far-away lands we look with calm indifference, but to find the very same practice still lingering among our sturdy Ross-shire Highlanders, is certainly somewhat startling!

Similar customs are still kept up at St. Mary's Well, in the birch wood above the house of Culloden, two miles from Inverness, where, on this same morning (first Sunday in May, old style),

several hundred people assemble from far and near, to wish for their heart's desire, drink solemnly, and hang up a rag on the bushes before sunrise, as being a most efficacious hour, though they continue coming as long as the dew lies on the grass, which it often does all day. Formerly a chapel stood close by, but its ruins have now disappeared.

There were certain wells from which water was carried to the sick. It was necessary that it should be drawn before sunrise, that the bearer should not speak on his way to or from the well, neither open his lips till the sick man had drunk the life-giving potion. Nor might the water-vessel be allowed to touch the ground. There were also peculiar virtues belonging to water drawn from under a bridge "over which the living walked and the dead were carried." Especial virtue was attached to south-running water.

One condition of success in all these charms was that there should be no looking backward, a point strongly insisted on by all wizards, in all lands.

All lads and lasses who, on Hallow-e'en, peer into the looking-glass for visions of the future, know well that they must not dare to glance backward, lest they should see more than they ought.

One curious legend of my own dear old home, tells how Sir Robert Gordon of Gordonstown, who was well known to have dealings with the powers of darkness, chose one morning to drive his coach and four across Loch Spynie, after a single night's frost. He bade his servant to sit steady, and on no account look back. The man obeyed, till just as they reached the further side, he could not resist "a glower ower his left shoulder," and as he turned, he beheld a large black raven fly from the back of the carriage, which at the same instant sank into the mud, so near the edge, however, that the good steeds managed to extricate it without further aid from the spirit world.

These sacred wells seem to have been revered all over the country, and every now and then the records of the kirk-sessions tell of some luckless wight having been subjected to discipline for

heathenish practices as an example to all other offenders, without, however, producing the desired effect.

Among the various efforts made to check the Well-Worship in the seventeenth century was an order from the Privy Council, appointing Commissioners "to wait at Christ's well in Menteith on the first of May, and to seize all who might assemble at the spring, and imprison them in Doune Castle.

These "superstitious mud-earth-wells of Menteith" are described by Anderson, Dr. of Physicke, Edinburgh, A.D. 1618, as "all tapestried about with old rags, as certaine signes and sacraments *wherewith they arle the divell* with ane arls-pennie of their health ; *so suttle is that false knave*, making them believe it is only the virtue of the water, and no thing els. Such people cannot say with David 'The Lord is my Helper,' but the Devill."

Great efforts were then made to extinguish heathenism of all sorts, necromancies, and spells with trees and with stones.

Nevertheless, as we have seen, the old superstition still lingers in certain districts. At Glass, in Banffshire, the Wallack Well and the Corsmall Well still receive pins, buttons, rags, and coins from sick folk, who hope thereby to be cured of their diseases. So does St. Mungo's Well in Huntly, where the people assemble on the first of May, and carry away bottles of its water as a charm against the fairies, who are supposed to hold their revels at the Elfin Croft hard by. I thought of this custom while watching the pilgrims near the source of the Ganges sealing up bottles of the precious water, which they carry with them to their far-distant homes, therewith to anoint their most cherished idols.

Another favourite well has always been that of St. Cecilia, near Netherdale in Aberdeenshire : some strong enforcements of the law of trespass have, however, recently checked the meetings here. The same law did its best to check the gatherings at the old well at Hopeman in Morayshire, but the sturdy fishers there do not understand such interference with their ancient customs, so they are now left undisturbed.

St. Fergon's Well, near Inverlochy, is another which is said to possess divers virtues, and continues to be a favourite place of

resort—the general offering to its spirit being a crooked pin, or, on rare occasions, “a bawbee.”

The well at Methelclunie, near Dufftown, is a great gathering-point on May morning, when the usual offerings of pins, &c. are made. The well of Montblairie, also in Banffshire, is equally sacred; so is St. Colman's Well, in the parish of Kiltearn, in Ross-shire, and that of Culbokie, also in Ross-shire.

But perhaps the most popular of all is the Greuze Well, near Dunkeld, which is still frequented by people from all parts of the country, who bring their sick children, that, having tasted the mystic waters, they may be healed. The offerings here are of a very superior sort, as silver coin is occasionally thrown in instead of the more frequent pins and pence; and rags and scraps of the sick folk's clothes are left hanging on the heathery tufts, as a reminder to the spirit of the Greuze. Such offerings are especially common on behalf of idiot children.

St. Mary's Well at Orton, on Spey-side, still continues to attract crowds on certain days, chiefly of young folk, who here hold their tryst—lads and lasses who count on a day's sweethearting and merry-making; but for more serious purposes, such as quest of health, it seems to have somewhat lost favour lately, though it is not long since we noticed a girl hiding the cap of a sick baby under a stone, as though shrinking from observation.

In Badenoch, however, there is no such shame. There are wells for heart-ache and wells for tooth-ache, and one well that is bottomless, for when careless hands drop their pails therein they can never be recovered.

St. Fillan's Well, in Perthshire, has been held sacred from time immemorial, though the name it bears dates only from the days of that sainted abbot of Strath-Fillan, to whose pious intervention Bruce was said to owe the victory of Bannockburn. The King's chaplain had been commanded (so says Boethius) to bring to the field of battle the sacred arm of the saint; but the wily priest, fearing the loss of the relic, brought only its silver shrine. Yet when the King invoked the holy saint, the shrine opened of its own accord, revealing the precious limb laid safely therein; and the

soldiers beholding this token of the favour of heaven, fought as those already assured of victory.

St. Fillan's Well was long believed to cure insanity, and the luckless sufferers received very rough handling to effect this, being thrown from a high rock down into the well, and then locked up for the night in the ruined chapel. On "the witch-elm that shades St. Fillan's spring" were hung the gay rags and scraps of ribbon wherein the saint was supposed to find delight. An average of two hundred patients were annually brought to this well.

Precisely similar was the belief of the Welsh in the waters of Llandegla for the cure of both epilepsy and insanity. The luckless patient was led thrice sunwise round the Holy Well, where he was to wash himself and cast in an offering. He was then to carry a cock thrice sunwise round the well, and thrice round the church, and was then bound for the night and left lying beneath the Communion Table, with his head resting on the Bible—a curious blending of "the Table of the Lord" with the service of devils. If the patient was a woman, a hen was substituted for the cock. In either case the victim was imprisoned with the patient, that into it the demon of insanity might pass. In the morning the patient made an offering of money, and departed, leaving the fowl as his substitute.

A very important feature in the ceremonial at St. Fillan's, Struthill, and other wells where lunatics were cured, is, that after their bath in the holy fountain and their sunwise procession, they were tied to a pillar, supposed to be far more ancient than the Christian church wherein it stood. Just such a pillar, in the ruined city of Anarajapoor, in Ceylon, is said to be possessed of precisely similar virtues, and though the natives call it an old Buddhist monument, it is probably a relic of a much earlier superstition.

Then, too, the legend which tells how Gautama Buddha first realized his having attained perfection, by finding that a dish, which he placed on the water, would float miraculously against the current of the stream, is much the same notion as we find connected with various holy wells; such as the Well of Shadar, in Isle

Bernera, whereon a wooden bowl was set floating as a means of discovering whether a sick person would or would not rally. Should the dish turn *deisul*, all would be well, but if *widdershins*, then doom was sealed.

St. Andrew's Well, in the Isle of Lewis, was also consulted as an oracle when any one was dangerously ill. A wooden tub full of this water was brought to the sick man's room, and a small dish was set floating on the surface of the water; if it turned sunwise it was supposed that the patient would recover, otherwise he must die.

Of equal, if not greater, interest than these survivals of the old Well-Worship, are those which point to the Worship of Fire and of the Heavenly Bodies—antiquarian chips for which we must seek warily, and chiefly amongst the unlettered poor, who walk after the traditions of their fathers, without any wish to seek out new inventions.

We have not to search far for the first indication, inasmuch as the Highlanders still call the year Bheil-aïne, *i. e.* "the circle of Bel, or the Sun."

Of course, in seeking for traces of the old Fire-Worship, we are most likely to find them on those days when the great Fire Festivals were celebrated. Of these, the four principal were held on the eve of May-day or Spring; on Midsummer's eve; on Hallow-e'en, the Autumn festival; and at Yule, the mid-winter feast.

It is from the great Spring Festival that we still retain our poetical name for the eve of May-day, Beltane or Beil-teine, which means Baal's fire, a name familiar to every Highlander, and still commonly used in Ireland.

So late as the beginning of the present century, it was customary in some remote corners of the Highlands, especially in Stirlingshire and Perthshire, for the young folk to meet on the moors on the 1st of May, and after cutting a "round table" in the green sod by digging such a trench round it as to allow of their sitting in a great circle, to kindle a fire in the middle, and cook a mess of eggs and milk, which all shared. Then they baked oat-cakes, a bit for each person present, and one bit was burnt black.

These cakes were shuffled in a man's bonnet, and each person, blindfold, drew one. Whoever got the black bit had to leap three times through the flames. The original meaning of which was that he became a sacrifice to Baal, and, doubtless, in old days was actually offered up; the object being to secure the favour of the Sun-god, and consequently a good harvest. I have been told by several persons that they have found traces of these Beltane circles in quite recent years, so probably the practice is not yet extinct.

I am told that in some parts of Perthshire it is still the custom for the cow-herd of the village to go his rounds on May morning collecting fresh eggs and meal, and then to lead the way to some hill-top, where a hole is dug and a fire lighted therein; then lots are cast, and he on whom the lot falls, must leap seven times over the fire, while the young folk dance round in a circle. Then they cook their eggs and cakes, and all "sit down to eat and drink and rise up to play."

The circular trench was of course only another form of the same symbolism as the Druidic stone circles, within which the fires of Baal were continually kept burning. A curious proof of this is the fact, recorded by the late Lady Baird, of Ferntower, in Perthshire, that every year at Beltane a number of men and women assembled at an ancient circle of stones on her property near Crieff, and, having lighted a fire in the centre, as their forefathers had been accustomed to do from time immemorial, proceeded to draw lots for the burnt oat-cake, as described above, he who drew it having straightway to leap through the flames. A strangely unmeaning ceremony if, as some learned men would have us believe, these circles are merely sepulchral, but very suggestive indeed if we are content to accept the traditions of our fathers, of their having been the temples on whose altars unhallowed fire was wont to burn.

In some districts the shepherds varied the Beltane festival. They cut the circular trench and kindled a fire like their neighbours, and after marching thrice *deas-sol* round the fire, they sat in a great circle and shared the mess of eggs, milk, and oat-meal, pouring out part thereof as a libation to the spirits. This done, they each took pieces of oat-cake, specially prepared for the occasion,



each cake having upon it nine raised knobs of mystic meaning. This they cast into the fire, dedicating it to the Eagle, the Hoodie Crow, the Gled, the Weasel, the Fox, the Brock, and all other baneful creatures, who were thus bribed to spare the flocks. This custom was commonly observed up to the middle of last century, even in civilized Morayshire. When all the eggs were roasted and all the cakes baked, the surplus was carried home, and every man gathered certain herbs, which he tied to his staff, and fastened bunches of the same above his cow-byre to preserve his cattle from all disease until the following May-day.

Every cow-herd was bound to wear a sprig of rowan (mountain ash), to keep off the warlocks from his charge, and no cow-byre was accounted safe which was not provided with cross-twigs of rowan tied with red thread.

At Beltane, rowan-twigs were carried thrice sunwise round the bonfires, then carried home, and placed in every house to ward off all evil in the coming year. On the same day the farmers of Strathspey and Inverness were wont to make a twisted hoop of rowan, and cause each sheep and lamb to pass through it, till the whole flock had thus been secured from harm.

Every cow-herd having a due regard to the safety of his cattle would certainly drive his beasts with a rowan stick. In Forfarshire we know of certain byres where, if even the rowan tree and red thread have failed to keep away disease, the cow-herd invariably places a burning peat on the threshold of the byre, and makes the sick beasts walk over it, as a sure and infallible cure; while in Islay the custom is on May morning to smear the ears of the cattle with tar to keep off the warlocks.

One very ancient custom for the good of the cattle was to take a sod from the roof of the byre, and a burning peat, and plunge both in a pail of strong ale,—a drink which was made from the young tops of heather, with a certain proportion of malt; it seems to have been the favourite brew of the ancient Picts, but the art of preparing it is now lost.

I am told that to see a really characteristic celebration of Beltane we should go to the Isle of Man, where the month of May is still

called Boabdyn, or Baal's fire, and where the custom of bonfires on the eve of May-day is kept up to such an extent "as to give the appearance of a general conflagration, whilst the inhabitants blow horns and hold a kind of jubilee." Until very recently the Manx used to light two fires near together, and cause their cattle to pass between them, as a protection against murrain. The origin of these fires was of course in honour of Baal.

The same custom prevailed in Ireland up to the tenth century, where May-day is still called La Bealtine, or Latha, which in Celtic means day; and is to be traced in many parts of Germany and Holland, where the Beltane fire festivals are still fully observed.

The next great Fire Festival was on what we now call the eve of St. John, or Midsummer's Eve, when the Sun had run half his course.

In Scotland, the Midsummer's Eve Festival was observed till very recent times. It was customary to kindle great bonfires near the corn-fields, and then make the *daisul* round the fields, with burning torches, to secure a blessing on the crops. Shaw mentions having frequently seen this done both in Moray and in the Lowlands in the middle of the last century. In Cornwall also the feast was, till quite lately, celebrated in various villages, and in all probability is still kept up. Great bonfires blazed, and torchlight processions marched sunwise round the fires and round the village.

In Ireland too this night was long considered an occasion for rejoicing; and so late as 1795 a gentleman writes from Dublin to one of the magazines, describing "the lighting of the fires at midnight in honour of the sun; the clamours, and other ceremonies, such as strewing the streets with divers herbs."

Charlotte Elizabeth, describing the huge bonfires in Ireland, and the scenes she herself witnessed, tells how the people all danced everlasting jigs to the music of the pipes. This lasted some hours. Then, when the fire burnt low, *every one present passed through the fire, and children were thrown across the glowing embers.* Lord John Scott, speaking of the same festival, says he has seen parents force *unwilling children to pass through these purifying Baal fires.*

The custom of passing children and cattle through the fire was

one of the rites which was longest in force in these isles. Even in the early part of this century, it was, as we have already noticed, the constant practice at these festivals, both in the Highlands and in Ireland, for fathers to take their children in their arms and leap thrice through the flames. The cattle were driven between two fires kindled near together. It was also the custom to make criminals stand between two fires, to expiate their sins, or else walk barefoot thrice over the burning ashes of a carn-fire. Hence the Gaelic description of a man in dire extremity, that he was "Eilir da theine Bheil," that is, between two fires of Baal.

Perhaps the most interesting trace that still remains to us of this Midsummer homage to the Sun is a custom which, for ages unknown, has been observed at Stonehenge, and which acquires double importance in these days, when this, and all kindred buildings, are set down as being either merely sepulchral, or else memorials of old battles. Mr. William Beck writes, that every year, on 21st June, a number of people assemble on Salisbury Plain at 3 a.m., in the chill of early dawn, and make for the circles of Stonehenge, from the centre of which, looking north-east, a block of stone, set at some distance from the ruin, is so seen that its top coincides with the line of the horizon, and if no mist prevail, the Sun, as it rises *on this, the longest day of the year, will be seen coming up exactly over the centre of the stone, known from this circumstance as the Pointer.*

Mr. Beck has himself repeatedly witnessed this interesting proof of the solar arrangement of the circles of Stonehenge; has watched the Sun thus come up over the Pointer, and *strike its first ray, through the central entrance, to the so-called altar-stone of the ruin.* He points out how this same huge stone is set at such an angle that at noon it marks the shadow like the gnomon of a sun-dial.

The great Autumn Fire Festival seems to have occurred on the 1st November, when all fires were extinguished, save those of the Druids, from whose altars only, the holy fire must be purchased by all householders, for a certain price.

The festival is still known in Ireland as Samhein or La Samon, *i. e.* the Feast of the Sun; and on the eve of the 1st of November

all manner of old games and customs are still observed just as fully as in Scotland, where, however, though All Saints' Day is a thing forgotten, the heathen festival has assumed the name of Hallow-e'en.

Of the countless varieties of Hallow-e'en games, it would be superfluous to write, as they are so well known. Only it is curious to notice that they all retain some trace of old practices of divination.

First, the mystic apple comes into play—the apple that so often appears in Celtic fairy lore. These swim in water, and each person in turn must catch one in his mouth. The apple when caught must be carefully peeled, and the long strip of peel passed thrice, *sunwise*, round the head, and thrown over the shoulder, when it will fall in the form of the true love's initial-letter.

Then, advancing to a mirror, without looking back, a face will presently be therein reflected, looking over the shoulder, and it needs good nerve to resist looking round, which is always strictly prohibited in every form of superstition. This too is a relic of *that form of divination with mirrors which was condemned as sorcery by the popes of old. Hence we find hand-mirrors among the emblems sculptured on the stones of Pagan Scotland.*

Numerous are the other Hallow-e'en games, but all have something of the same character. The majority involve going out alone on some errand—to pull a cabbage-stalk, or walk sunwise round the peat-stack. It is supposed that *some one* will appear in the form of the future lover. Not a word must be spoken, either going or coming.

Formerly, every farm over the length and breadth of the land had its Hallow-e'en bonfire, which was often surrounded by a circular trench, symbolical of the sun.

These fires are in many districts nearly burnt out, but it is not many years since Sheriff Barclay says he could count thirty fires, blazing on the hill-tops between Dunkeld and Abergeldy, and could discern the weird figures of the people dancing round them, while the faint echoes of their choruses gave a still more unearthly feeling to the midnight.

In the neighbourhood of Crieff, also in Perthshire, the bale-fires,

as the people call them, still blaze as brightly as ever, as we have had full opportunity of observing in the course of long twilight drives, when it seemed as if every cottage we passed had its little bonfire for the children; while later in the evening, larger fires were lighted by their elders, and kept up till midnight. We saw groups of dark figures dancing round the fires; the principal refreshment consisting of milk, thickened with oatmeal. Here, as in the northern counties, especially in Banff and Aberdeenshire, all rejoicings are deferred till the 11th November; that is Hallow-e'en old style.

Sometimes, when the bonfire begins to burn low, a circle of stones is placed round it; *one to represent each person present*.<sup>1</sup> Should any stone be moved before morning, it is a token of evil to that person. He is said to be *fey*, and his death within the year is considered probable.

The night of the 1st of November, Christianized as the Eve of All Souls, was especially sacred to Samhein, who merely represented the sun in another character. It was a night for special intercession by the living for the souls of those who had died in the preceding year. For the office of Samhein was to judge these souls, and either award them their place of reward or of punishment. He was also called Bal Sab, or the Lord of Death. At this harvest festival he only needed offerings of the fruits of the earth; and his name, Samhein or Samtheine, denotes peace-fire. It is probable that Saint Samthana, whose day is still marked in the Romish calendar, was in some way connected with this festival.

On the 25th December, when the shortest day was past, the great winter festival called Yule was celebrated, to mark the turn of the year—the sun's new birth. It was a day of solemn worship and a night of feasting. Fires blazed on every hill, which were rekindled on the twelfth night subsequent to Yule. Sacred plants were cut—more especially the ivy and mistletoe.

<sup>1</sup> In the modern monolithic circles in the neighbourhood of Bombay, it has been observed that the number of stones differs in each circle, and it is supposed that each stone represents a family who there sacrifices; just as the twelve stones which Moses and Joshua set up on Mount Sinai and at Gilgal represented the Twelve Tribes.

On Yule morning, offerings of oatmeal and of various grains were made to Hulda, the Divine Mother, to induce her to send abundant crops ; and the people feasted together. Hence the bowls of furmety or sowans, *alias* sour gruel, which in our childhood we always shared in the early Christmas morning. Hence too the custom of all the lads and lasses going from farm to farm, each carrying their own bowl and spoon, to share the brew of each gude-wife.

Probably it was also in her honour that those curious "Yule doughs" originated, still common in the north of England, where many a time we have assisted at the manufacture and baking of wonderful dolls, adorned with currants. Dolls masculine and dolls feminine, to be duly distributed as sweethearts to every lad and lass in the house—and many such have we received from village friends.

From the day answering to this 25th December, the ancient Hindus also reckoned the beginning of their new year, distinguishing the day as "the morning of the gods." How the seasons of their year were made to balance, is a standing mystery ; for we know that, like the Druids of the West, they reckoned by lunar years of 360 days.

On this night the Persians from time immemorial celebrated the birth of their god, Mithra, the sun, whom they also worshipped under the name Tseur, or Saviour, because of his saving them from the empire of Ahriman, the power of darkness.

Amongst other games peculiar to this day, both among Persians and Arabs, is one known as the game of the Beardless Rider, when men, hideously disguised and painted, ride through the city on asses, playing all manner of whimsical pranks, and going from door to door, followed by an admiring multitude, to solicit small gifts. The custom answers precisely to that of "guizarding," still practised in various parts of Scotland, and known in England as mumming and morris dancing.

Not alone in Persia was this day held in honour. In ancient Babylon it was sacred to Rhea and Nin, the latter being the child of the sun, born of a human mother.

It is said that in Etruria, Gaul, and even Britain, a similar form of worship was observed on this birthnight, and that the goddess of the year was represented as nursing the infant god of day.

When the earlier teachers of Christianity found themselves unable to abolish times and ceremonies so widely observed, and with so great a hold on the faith of the people, it seems to have been judged expedient to engraft the great Christian festival on that already established, without too rigid an attempt to alter external customs.

There is no doubt that this day first began to be observed as that of our LORD's nativity, about the middle of the fourth century, under the Roman Bishop Liberius, and was not adopted by the Eastern Church till somewhat later. St. Chrysostom, in preaching at Antioch A.D. 386, speaks of it as having been first observed in that city about ten years previously. Had the feast been of certain date, it would be very strange that the city in which the disciples first received the name of Christians, should have been so tardy in making it a day of annual rejoicing. St. Augustine also admits that the observance of this feast, now so dear to every Christian heart, was neither sanctioned by any great council nor derived from apostolic usage. In fact it was never mentioned by any of the ante-Nicene Fathers, even while enumerating the other festivals of the Church.

It does seem strange, indeed, that the early Christians should have retained no definite tradition of the exact date of the Nativity. Indeed there is the greatest possible doubt when any feast commemorating it, was instituted. Some believe it to be traceable to the first century, but the first certain information we have respecting it, was its being sanctioned as a Church Festival by Pope Telesphorus about A.D. 137. We next hear of it in the persecutions under Diocletian, who burnt a church full of Christians while they were celebrating this feast.

But though the observance of a birthday festival gradually spread, every branch of the Christian Church selected whatever day seemed best in its own eyes, and such was the diversity of opinion on this subject, that we are told that *no less than one hundred and thirty-six*

*different days in the year have been fixed on for Christmas-day by various Christian sects and learned men !*

They have been summed up as follows : " The Egyptian Christians said the right season was in January. Wagenseil thought February or August, but inclined to the latter. Bochart was for March. Some, mentioned by Clemens Alexandrinus, placed it in April, and others in May. Epiphanius mentions two sects, one fixing it in June, the other in July. Lightfoot says September 15th. \* Scaliger, Casaubon, and Calvisius are for October. Several others put it in November. The Latin Church decided on December 25th, which is the day now universally recognized by Christendom. This was decreed by Pope Julius I. A.D. 337, and he fixed it on the same day that the ancient Romans celebrated the feast of their goddess Bruma, a festival much observed by the heathen in the winter solstice."

It would, however, appear as if December could lay even less claim to this honour than most of the other months suggested, inasmuch as the rainy season in Judea being then at its height, the shepherds would probably betake them to their homes rather than watch all night in the open fields. Nevertheless, in the absence of a certain date, the selection of one particular day was a mere matter of expediency.

Neander and others, writing on this subject, observe that precisely at this season of the year, a series of heathen festivals occurred, so closely interwoven with the whole civil and social life, that it was impossible to wean the people from them. First came the Saturnalia, the maddest, merriest day of the year. Then the custom of making presents (the Strenæ), followed by the *festival of infants*, when the little ones received gifts of images. Next the birthday of the New Sun. Therefore it was advisable to draw the Christians away from sharing in the revelries of their Pagan neighbours, by substituting some legitimate cause of rejoicing, and what more natural than the birth of CHRIST, the Spiritual Sun appearing to dispel the powers of darkness and to be Himself the Light of the world ?

A feast so reasonable found ready acceptance, though it was long ere the churches agreed on which day it should be celebrated ; those



of the East still preferring to observe it on the 6th January, which had there already been adopted as the Feast of the Epiphany. It was not till the sixth century that anything like unanimity prevailed on the subject, between the Eastern and Western Churches, and that all acknowledged the wisdom of substituting a series of Christian feast-days, for those heathen merry-makings which the converts were called on to abjure.

Nevertheless the universal feasting was still liable to abuse, and too often degenerated into mere revelry and drunkenness ; puppet shows and miracle plays were devised to replace the idol worship of the temples, and pagan superstition and excess still continued to reign under a new and more sacred name.

*Yule having thus been deposed in favour of Christmas, it followed as a matter of course, that the Midsummer Festival, just six months earlier, must represent the nativity of St. John the Baptist.* Thus two of the principal Pagan festivals were at once utilized, and the bonfires, the exchange of gifts, the cutting of evergreens, and the feasting, were endowed with new meaning, and so continue to this day ; though the wild rejoicings of Yule have resolved themselves into more sober Christmas mirth.

The mistletoe of the Druids, and the Yule-log which once blazed in honour of Odin and Thor, still hold their honoured place, and until very recent times, *the charred remains of the log of one year were preserved carefully until the following Yule*, when they served to light the new log ; their presence in the house being a safeguard against fire. A monstrous candle called the Yule candle was also lighted, and was expected to burn for twelve nights.

There is a further division of the winter festivals, by the partial adoption of New Style in reckoning. Thus just as one half of the people keep Hallow-e'en on the last night of October, and the others observe the 11th of November, so with the New Year. This is especially remarkable on the Inverness and Ross-shire coasts, which face one another, on either side of the Beaully Firth. Long before sunrise on the first of January, the Inverness hills are crowned with bonfires, and when they burn low, the lads and lassies dance round them, and trample out the dying embers. The opposite coast shows

no such fires till the morning of the New Year, Old Style, when it likewise awakens before daybreak to greet the rising sun.

One very curious old custom is still observed in our good town of Burghead (on the Moray Firth). It is called The Burning of the Clavie. Its meaning and its origin are alike unknown—but from time immemorial the fisher folk and seamen have, on this Yule night, *reckoned according to Old Style*, assembled at the west side of the town, carrying an old tar-barrel and other combustible materials. This barrel being sawn in two, the lower half is nailed into a long spoke of firewood, which acts as a handle. *This nail must not be struck by a hammer*, but is driven in with a stone.

The half-barrel is next filled with dry wood, saturated with tar, and built up like a pyramid, leaving only a hollow to receive a burning peat, for no modern lucifer match may be applied, and a final libation of tar completes the Clavie, which is shouldered by one of the lads, quite regardless of the streams of boiling tar which of course trickle all down his back ; should he stumble or fall, the omen would be held unlucky indeed, both to the town and to himself. When weary of his burden, a second is ready to fill the honoured post, and then a third and a fourth, till the Clavie has made the circuit of the town, when it is carried to a hillock, called the Doorie, where a hollowed stone receives the fir spoke. Fresh fuel is added, and in olden days, the blaze continued all night, and at last was allowed to burn itself out untouched.

Now, after a short interval, the Clavie is thrown down the western side of the hill, and a desperate scramble ensues for the burning brands, the possession of which is accounted to bring good luck, and *the embers are carried home, and carefully preserved till the following year*, as a safeguard against all manner of evil. In bygone times it was thought necessary that one man should carry it right round the town, so the strongest was selected to bear this weighty honour.

Moreover, it was customary to carry the Clavie round every ship in the harbour, a part of the ceremony which has latterly been discontinued. Occasionally, however, the Clavie is still rowed round some favoured vessel.

The modern part of the town is not included in the circuit, only the old town is thus encompassed by a protecting wall of fire. Round this town of Burghead are certain green hillocks known as the Bailies. Doubtless they also bear witness to the bale-fires which once crowned them.

The only other place where I can hear of any custom akin to this burning of the Clavie is at Logierait, in Perthshire, where certainly till late years (probably even to this day) the young men assembled on Hallow-e'en, and made great torches of faggots, by binding broom, flax, and heather on a pole. This being kindled, is, or was, carried on the shoulders of a strong lad, who runs round the village, followed by all the crowd; and as fast as one faggot burns out, a second is kindled. Sometimes several are lighted simultaneously.

Pennant describes the same ceremony as one of the regular institutions of Hallow-e'en a hundred years ago, and says that when the faggot had been thus carried round the village, its embers were used to kindle a great bonfire. This custom, says Borlase, was forbidden by the Gallic Councils, and all concerned were held to be as guilty as though they had actually sacrificed to devils.

Of course, though the old customs are still retained, their original meaning is utterly forgotten; and the man who throws a live peat after a woman who is about to increase the population, or he who on Hallow-e'en throws a lighted brand over his own shoulder without looking at whom he aims, little dreams whence sprang these time-honoured games.

One remarkable practice which, till very recently, existed in Lewis and other Isles, was that of carrying fire all round the houses and goods of different members of the community, more especially round women after the birth of children, and round infants till after their baptism, to protect them from evil spirits.

In like manner no Shetlander will venture after nightfall to pass the green hillocks haunted by elfin tribes, unless he carries with him a live coal.

To look much nearer home, we know of one good old wife living in Banffshire, who carries a live peat sunwise round her cottage

every night, just as regularly as she says her prayers. Moreover she is most particular about keeping a red thread twisted round her cow's tail, as otherwise she is convinced that the milk would pass from her cow to her neighbour's. Also if it is sick, she at once kindles the old Need-fire.

I know that in many of the remote glens of Perthshire there are still living women who on Beltane morn always throw ashes and a live peat over their own heads, repeating a certain formula of words to bring them luck. But the strictest secrecy is observed, lest such practices should reach the ear of the minister: so the stronger their belief, the less willing are they to confess to any knowledge of such matters.

Such quaint old superstitions are common in every corner of England and Scotland, though rarely noticed save when they lead to some mischief which brings them within ken of the law.

Thus at Craigmillar, near Edinburgh, a woman, not long ago, refused to give a neighbour "a bit peat" to light her fire, because she was supposed to be uncanny. The old woman muttered, as she turned away, that her churlish neighbour might yet repent of her unkindness. This speech the other repeated to her husband on his return from work, whereupon he went straight to the old woman's house, and gave her a sharp cut on the forehead, for which he was duly called to account, and pleaded his belief that scoring the witch above the breath would destroy her glamour! This, it seems, is a common article of faith.

Some very curious notions as to this non-giving of fire exist in some Highland districts. In various districts of Perthshire, in Ross-shire, and in Strathspey, I have found instances of it. At Beltane, Midsummer, Hallow-e'en, and particularly at the New Year, and on some intervening days, there is a dread of ill luck in allowing a neighbour to take a kindling from the hearth, or even a light for a pipe. An old servant from the island of Islay tells me that there no one would, on any account, give or take a light at Hogmanay, that is, at the new year.

A schoolmaster, in Ross-shire, also gave me various proofs of this superstition which had come under his immediate notice. For

instance, an old wife came to a neighbour's house to get "a kindling" for her fire. There was no one in the house but a wide-awake lassie eight years old. So well versed was the child in this fire lore, that she would neither give a match nor a cinder. Having turned out the poor old body, the little girl immediately went to fetch two friends, and they followed the old woman to her home, where, sure enough, they found a blazing fire and a boiling pot. "See you," said the lassie, "gin the *cailliach* had gotten the kindling, my father would not get a herring this year!"

In like manner a poor tinker's wife came into a house in Applecross, Ross-shire, one morning in July, 1868, and took up a live peat from the hearth to kindle her own fire. She had got to some distance before she was observed, whereupon the gude-wife rushed after her, and, snatching away the poor gipsy's prize, turned to a stranger who ventured to remonstrate, saying, "Do you think I am to allow my cow to be dried up? If I allowed her to carry away the fire, I would not have a drop of milk to-night to wet the bairns' mouths." She then threw the peat into a pail of water, so as to recover whatever milk might already have found its way from poor crummie to the tinker's camp.

Generally, when a kindling has thus been taken by stealth, it is considered safer to consult a wise woman (or, as they call her, a disciple of Black Donald), that she may put a counter-check on the evil designs of the unneighbourly neighbour.

We find allusions to this quaint superstition in divers legends of old, as for instance in those that tell of the mighty brothers Akin and Rhea, prehistoric giants, who dwelt on the mainland, and occasionally crossed over to the Isle of Skye by leaping the Straits. The brothers built two strong towers in the Glenelg country, where they lived in fraternal harmony, till on one evil day the younger brother, returning to his home, found only a black hearth to greet him. Weary and chill, he passed on to his brother's castle, where the fire was smouldering as usual. Soon he kindled a cheery blaze, and having warmed himself, prepared to return to his own lair, *taking with him, however, a burning peat for a kindling.* At this moment the loving elder brother returned from the chase, and great

was his wrath on perceiving the theft ! The culprit made off with all speed, as well he might, for to this day the valley is strewn with rocks hurled after him by the infuriated giant ; one mighty boulder in particular stands forth as a warning to all men to respect the rights of Fire.

This curious fear of ill-luck connected with the giving or stealing of fire is evidently a survival of Druidic customs—of those solemn Fire-Festivals, on the eve of which the fires which usually smouldered day and night on the hearth were purposely extinguished, that on the Great Day of the Festival, when the priests had by friction kindled new sacred fire, each household might provide itself with a kindling from the altar, and so sanctify its own hearth afresh.

As the purchase of this fire was a source of profit to the priests, *it would naturally be considered criminal for one neighbour to give it to another* at the seasons when every man was bound to purchase it for himself. Terrible penalties were in store for any rash person who dared to kindle a flame from any other source. This sacred fire was fed with the peeled wood of a certain tree, and must never be blown with the breath, lest it should be polluted.

Precisely similar is the custom which prevails among the Guebres and Parsees of the present day. All fires being allowed to die out, each family must procure sacred fire from the temples, wherewith to rekindle the domestic hearth. In the Talmud it is stated that the Israelites who were captives in Persia adopted this practice.

A very interesting survival of this old custom is still practised on the Midsummer Festival (the Eve of St. John) in the Spanish Pyrenees, at Luchon and other places, where the ancient bale-fires—Christianized as The Fires of St. John—are kindled by the priests, while chanting sacred hymns ; and when these sacred fires have burnt themselves out, *the charred wood is distributed among the people, so that every household may have a portion*, which is religiously preserved throughout the year.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Some interesting particulars of this quaint custom were given in the 'Saturday Review,' July 15th, 1882. "At Bagnères de Bigorre, Midsummer Eve is still kept in half pagan-wise. A mighty funeral pile of logs and faggots,

Lamartine alludes to the ceremonies of this night as now practised in the French Alps. He tells how the peasants have processions, and carry lighted torches of pine-wood and straw. Should they wish especial luck to any young couple, they march round them in a circle, just as the islanders of the West used to do.

In the Vosges the May-day festival is adjourned till the first Sunday in Lent, when immediately after vespers, the lads and lassies form two separate chains, and having thrice circled sunwise round the village green, they pair off all present, one couple at a time, circling three times round each couple. Then, on a given signal, each girl receives a torch brought from the church, and the whole company go up to set fire to a pile of wood in the middle of the green. As it blazes up they resume their whirling dance, and when the bonfire is nearly extinct, each couple joins in the scramble for a brand, and those who succeed in getting one, carry it off in triumph to the home of the young woman.

These Fire-Festivals seem to have been celebrated in much the same manner all over Europe, for there seems to be literally no corner where we do not find some of the old ceremonies still practised; nowhere more notably than on the shores of the Baltic—in Prussia, Lithuania, and the lands adjacent. Indeed the name of the Baltic, and of many Scandinavian places, still point to the old worship.

But with equal right may we seek traces of the old Paganism on

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with a tall fir-tree standing erect in its midst, is prepared in every village through the mountains. As the twilight darkens on St. John's Eve, the Curé, arrayed in all his robes, issues from the church, followed by all his satellites chanting lustily. The pile is blessed with much burning of incense, and sprinkling with holy water, to scare off the evil spirits. As the pile blazes up, the crowd with one consent precipitates itself on the bonfire, and tears it to pieces. Blazing brands are sent flying in all directions. Every one is so eager to procure a piece of charred stick to act as a charm against injury by lightning during the ensuing year, that he has no thought for the danger of being burnt or trodden to death in the bustle. Lighted by the lurid glare of the blazing tree, the scene is one not soon to be forgotten, and adds one more to the many pleasant memories that the visitor to Bagnères cannot fail to carry away with him."

the shores of Armorica—inasmuch as both in Brittany, and more especially in Finisterre, the people clung to their ancient worship with such tenacity, that beyond the mere fact of baptism, they could hardly, two hundred years ago, be called Christians at all ; but continued to worship, as their fathers had done before them, amid the huge ghostly temples which still abound in all that district. So we hear of zealous priests going forth in the seventeenth century as Missionaries to preach Christianity to the people of Finisterre, as almost a new faith. Even then Church Councils vainly strove to stop the pilgrimages to these Druidic circles.

At the present day they blend, with picturesque effect, in various scenes of peasant life. Thus, on Midsummer's-eve, all the lads and lasses in Brittany assemble at divers groups of old weather-beaten stones. The lads wear green corn, the girls a bunch of flax, with blue blossoms. They lay their corn and flax on the great grey stones, and dance round them till sunset. Then, according as they find their flowers fresh or withered, they read the fate of their love ; and return home, each lad leading his lass by one finger. As the darkness closes in, bonfires are lighted on every hill-top, lighting up all the land with their red glow, and the young people dance wildly round them, hurrying from one bonfire to the next ; for all manner of luck in love and life attends those who have danced round nine fires before midnight.

In Sardinia, on this night, the people light great bonfires in their villages and at every cross-road. Men make compacts one with another by passing their hands three times through the flames while grasping a stick. They also cause their children to leap through the flames. Then they go in procession to a church, near which they sit in a circle, and feast on eggs fried with divers herbs.

Not only in country districts, and by simple peasants, were these festivals observed till recent days, but in all the principal continental towns, such as Paris and Metz, where it was customary to kindle fires in the market-place. These were sometimes blessed by the parish priest, who offered a prayer in the name of St. John—thus adapting the old heathen festival to Christian use. The young people then leaped over the flames, and threw flowers and



garlands into them, singing, shouting, and dancing merrily. Even the great folk sometimes joined in the old games.

But imagine that only fifty years ago the Spring Festival received municipal honours in Edinburgh, where, on the first Sunday after Beltane, the magistrates used to walk down the Canongate in procession, decorated with flowers, and carrying large nosegays! Imagine the feelings of these grave men, if it had occurred to them that they were rejoicing over Bel's new birth!

Still more extraordinary does it seem to us, who know Cornhill only as a centre of London's busiest business life, to hear of days when the streets were crowded with merry-makers, and gaily-dressed maidens and smart 'prentices danced and frolicked, while the gigantic Maypole, adorned with flags and streamers, was dragged by forty oxen, all decked with flowers, through Cornhill to the Church of St. Andrew, Undershaft: so named because of the huge Maypole or shaft, far overtopping the church, which from time immemorial had been there erected. Near this Maypole were erected summer-halls, bowers, and arbours; and feasting and dancing went on all day, till evening drew on, when great bonfires were lighted.

Another celebrated London Maypole stood in the Strand, at the entrance of a street formerly known as Little Drury Lane, but which after the days of Cromwell was renamed Maypole Alley. It was a stately mast of cedar-wood, 134 feet long, prepared in the London docks, and carried to the Strand by a detachment of sailors, with bands playing and colours flying, amid the rejoicings of the people.

When grave citizens ceased to care for such frivolities, Sir Isaac Newton purchased the spar, and conveyed it to Wanstead in Essex to support a great telescope; and thus the poor old Maypole was forced to lend its aid to solemn science after all, a new phase of homage done to the host of heaven!

Comparatively few traces now remain in these isles of the worship of the moon goddess.

Some lingering notion of her influence doubtless inspired the extreme reverence with which the Highlanders and Islanders have

always noted all changes of the moon. So late as the year 1700, the latter invariably selected the time of the moon's increase for cutting their peat and rushes, building their earthen dykes *and felling timber* (hence we assume they *had* some trees then!), asserting that all manner of evils would attend their labour, should these things be done at the time of her decrease. As to the timber, they certainly have left little for their descendants! A birth or a marriage at the time of the full moon was accounted lucky; whereas to marry, or to kill a beast for food, while the moon was waning, would have been the height of folly. In fact, no important business was commenced at the wane.

Even in England there are still some remote corners, such as Dartmoor, where it is considered very dangerous to cut children's hair in March, at certain phases of the moon.

Certainly it is curious to trace back some of these simple customs to their origin. How little we think, as we kiss our hands to the young moon, that more than three thousand years ago, Job, the grand old Arabian patriarch, spoke of this very action as of a sin to be punished: a denial of the Creator!<sup>1</sup>

There seems always to have been some difficulty in determining under what sex to adore the host of Heaven. The feminine Sun, and Moon masculine, of the Germans certainly sound incongruous in our ears. In Northern India, also, as with the old Scandinavians, the moon is worshipped as a male divinity, under the name of Chandra (silvery), at whose great festivals all devout Hindus appear in white raiment, with silver ornaments. They sit on white cloths, and make offerings of milk and white sugar.

The moon found more favour with the women than the men, and while we hear of the old Highlanders taking off their bonnet to the rising sun, the women reserved their homage for the new moon. Any lassie who desired to invoke her protection, and crave her good influence in her sweethearting, had to go out at night and watch for the first new moon of the new year. Then kneeling on a "yerd-fast stane" (that is, one fixed immovably in the earth like the Druid altars), she was to lean her back against a tree, and thus wait

<sup>1</sup> Job xxxi. 26—28.

for the moment when she might hail the pale crescent as it rose above the horizon. Bitterly cold work this must have been, on a chilly night in January, but with such an object in view, what mattered the freezing blast?

How often we have laughed at the story of the lassie who thus went out to invoke the lady-moon, and pray that she would speedily send her a faithful swain. Now in the ivy behind her sat a great white owl, whose eyes winked and blinked and twinkled as he said "Who-o-oooo?" "Oh!" cried the lassie, "I dinna mind *who*. *Just anybody!*" Thereupon she returned home in all faith, and having found a suitable love, sent all her friends and companions forth on a similar errand.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## FOOTPRINTS OF THE PAST.

**Lonely Chapels—Blended Faiths—Sunwise Turns—East and West Divination by Smoke—Touch of a Seventh Son—The Royal Touch, a Cure for Scrofula—Burial of a Living Cock for Epilepsy—Legends of Isle Raasay—Of Wild Deer—Of buying a Gale—Witchcraft—Drawing the Tether—A Milk Charm from the Isle of Uist—Ancient and Modern Witches—The Evil Eye—Making Images to injure a Neighbour—Cats—Belief in Transmigration—The Luck of leaving a House unswept—Ill-Luck of succeeding an Ejected Tenant.**

AMONG the numerous interesting small isles lying off the large Isle of Skye, the group called the Shiant Isles is worthy of note. They rise to a height of about 500 feet, presenting to the waves a precipitous face of columnar basalt, much less regular than that of Staffa. In some places, where the pillars have fallen, the rock to which they were attached has a smooth surface, as if the columnar form were merely superficial. The puffin and the guillemot, and myriads of sea-fowl of every description, here make their homes, and hold undisputed possession of the site of a ruined Chapel, around which some ascetics of olden days made their lowly cells. One of the islands has good pasturage, and I believe a shepherd generally lives on the spot.

Very similar is the Isle of Flodigarry, also called Eilean Alteveg, whose pillars are unusually large, but the lower part is generally divided into sections, like a heap of gigantic millstones. Here

formerly stood a chapel sacred to St. Turoc, but of its ruins we saw no trace. All these islands and headlands have the same very striking form—namely, a long sloping face of smooth grass to the west, and a precipitous face eastward. Their position with regard to the points of the compass varies, however, at different parts of the coast.

## EILEAN ALTEYEO.

In very early days, these islanders were thought worthy of more spiritual care than falls to their lot now-a-days. There is hardly one island on which some devoted Christian did not make his cell and build his chapel. The more remote the island, the better it was cared for.

St. Kilda owns several such sites, to which indeed it seems to

owe its name. St. Ronan's oratory still remains on Isle Rona ; but in most cases the ruins have disappeared, and only the name of some saint, perhaps with the prefix of Kil, to mark his cell, tells that here once was holy ground, the place where prayer was wont to be made.

Here and there we find some little islet bearing only the name of Pabba, which is a corruption of Papa, or Father, the title whereby these anchorite fathers were addressed in the Norse tongue. One such isle lies off Skye, another off Harris, a third off Barra. We find Pappadil in Rum, and divers isles off Orkney and Shetland are known as Papa, the Father's Isle, telling their own history of those early servants of the Cross. Some, indeed, say that these Culdees were merely hermits (Cuil-dich, men of seclusion), who sought these desolate "clippings of the earth" as the loneliest spots in which they could hide from their species. Be that as it may, there can be no doubt that they did devote themselves to teaching the people, and in some measure succeeded in instilling a very grey, clouded sort of light.

For the result of their labours was much like what has been recorded of that of the priest of Samaria, who was brought to Bethel to teach the nations how they should fear the Lord. Their pupils took so kindly to both faiths, that we are told "*they feared the Lord and served their own gods*, their graven images, their children, and their children's children."

There was as strange a blending of faith as of race when these wild Norsemen and Celts first began to amalgamate. The new Christian faith retained so many of the practices of old Paganism, that at times it was hard to tell which claimed the upper hand ; and the people are described as having generally been " Christians, in time of peace, but always certain to invoke the aid of Thor, when sailing on any dangerous expedition."

At a later date they used to induce the priests to sprinkle the sea with holy water, as an infallible means of procuring plenty of herring ! and, at least until the year 1660, the custom prevailed on Hallow-e'en of wading into the sea, with a cup of ale, which was poured out as a libation to Shony, a sea-god, who was implored to

send abundant sea-ware for the good of the land. After this the people adjourned to the church, and from the church to the fields—to spend the night in feasting and dancing.

Of course the sea-going folk were sure to retain their old superstitions to the last, and it reads curiously in an account of the launch of Clan Ronald's galley, as sung by an old Celtic bard, to find, first a fervent prayer to the Holy Trinity for the safety of the ship; and that “He Who knows every harbour under the sun may render the breath of the sky propitious, and urge the vessel over the waters, uninjured, to a safe haven;” and then to find that, to make assurance doubly sure, *a he-goat had been suspended from the mast, to secure a favourable wind!* This double precaution seems to have failed in its object, for soon after leaving South Uist, a terrible storm arose, and the bard tells how “the awful world of waters drew on its rough mantle of thick darkness, swelling into mountains, and sinking into glens,” and how the tall masts of good red pine were shivered by the tempest. Not till they reached the Strait of Isla did Ocean make peace with these mariners, “and dismissed this host of winds to the upper regions of the air, leaving the waters smooth as a polished mirror.”

The unhappy goat which thus adorned Clan Ronald's mast, reminds us how, when the first crusade set forth from France and Britain, the Christian hosts carried with them a goose and a goat to which they rendered homage, believing the Holy Spirit to be present within them.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, too, it was that in the early glimmering of that grey dawn there existed such strange anomalies as that Christian Rewald, King of the East Saxons, who erected in his churches two altars, at one of which he offered sacrifices to Christ, and at the other to devils; a species of hedging not peculiar to the dark ages, for a recent writer on India tells us of a Hindu convert who, while firmly believing the Christian creed, and worshipping the Saviour, would nevertheless never pass an image of any of the Hindu gods, or even a sacred stone daubed with red paint, without kneeling down to worship it; for she used to say, “Maybe there's something in it!”

<sup>1</sup> Mill's ‘Hist. of the Crusades.’

The extent to which these Pagan rites were tolerated, even in later days, seems strange indeed. But the conciliatory policy of the mediæval Christians made room for every species of heathen observance, provided the people would submit to baptism. It was the same policy which in Rome itself suggested christening the idol-image of Jupiter, and so converting it into that adorable statue of St. Peter, which the people might thenceforward worship to their hearts' content, and whose sacred toes have ever since continued to receive such enthusiastic kisses from the Christians of all successive generations.

It was by adopting the symbols revered by the people, and giving them new meanings,—by sprinkling sacred stones with Holy Water, and by dedicating Holy Wells to Christian saints,—that the early teachers enlisted the local affections of the people on behalf of the new faith, and the old rites being retained, in course of ages true Christian churches were built on the identical spots where the heathen idolatries had so long prevailed. Such was the origin of our glorious cathedrals of Canterbury and Westminster; of St. Paul's, St. Martin's, St. Pancras's, and many another time-honoured place of worship. The tradition concerning Westminster is that it was built on the site of the Temple of Apollo.

Sometimes when Christian sanctuaries were built on Pagan sites, the very stones dear to the heathen were retained within the new church. A curious instance of this may be seen to this day in Spain, where at the hermitage of St. Michael at Arrichinaga, in the province of Biscay, a church has been built, actually enclosing the huge stones of a great dolmen, between which is placed the shrine of the saint. Thus the original veneration for the sacred stones was sanctified by the saintly combination. This Christian church is so modern as to prove that the reverence for the great stones must have continued till a very recent period.

I cannot but think that a similar policy accounts for a peculiarity of several ancient Christian stone altars (one of which you may see in a side chapel of Norwich Cathedral), where a square grey stone, measuring perhaps eighteen inches across, is inserted into a large stone slab of quite different formation and colour. It serves to



cover the hidden relic which gave sanctity to the altar, and was itself Christianized by being marked with five small crosses (symbolizing the five wounds of Christ). Nevertheless, it seems probable that these blue-grey stones which were exalted to such honour, were themselves originally objects of heathen veneration.

I am told that nowhere are the traces of this amalgamation more marked than in the highlands of Auvergne, once the stronghold of Druidism, and the province of all others where Paganism longest reigned in France. Here we are told that idolatrous worship lingered till very recent times; and though the Council of Clermont fulminated anathemas against those who worshipped stones—*who carried the Eucharist to the graves, who ate meats offered to devils*—still the old rites went on. So that a May-day or a Midsummer's-eve in Auvergne still afford us some remarkable instances of Christianized heathendom.

In glancing eastward and westward, nothing is more striking than the strong grip which this tendency to ancestor and devil-worship seems ever to have had over the human mind. Whatever waves of faith may have passed over a land—whether Christian, Mohammedan, Buddhist, or Brahmin—and however each may have striven, by gentle means or by the sword, to put it down, the crushed faith has still been treasured in secret, and though its own votaries are generally ashamed to confess it, still nothing will induce them to give it up. Thus it still exists all over the earth, independent of the reigning faith, whatever that may be, and actually in opposition to its teaching.

But of all old superstitions, that which we find most constantly cropping up is the practice of the *deisul*, that is, a turn southward, following the course of the sun, such as the custom of rowing a boat sunwise at first starting, or of walking thrice sunwise round any person to whom one wishes good-luck. At the new year, when the sun begins its yearly revolution, a cow's hide used in like manner to be carried thrice round the house, following the course of the sun.

The word *deisul* is derived from *deas*, the right hand, and *sul*, the sun; the right hand being always kept next to that object

round which the turn was made. I believe *deas* literally means the *south*, which lies on the right hand when the face looks eastward ; but the word is used to denote everything which is right and well doing. A person turning against the course of the sun faces the west, and everything becomes unlucky. His right hand will then be to the north, *tuath*, and the very word *tuathaisd*, denotes a stupid person ; hence the words *deisul* and *tuathail* are in Gaelic equivalent to right and wrong.

This contrary turn from right to left was called *widdershins*, or *cartua-sul*. It was only made when invoking a curse on some particular object. Thus evil-doers and malignant witches began the devil's work by so many turns against the course of the sun. Among the confessions of a wretched schoolmaster accused of witchcraft, and tortured in presence of James VI. and his Privy Council, he is shown to have gone round the church of North Berwick in a contrary direction to the sun, after which he merely blew upon the lock, and the door opened. For this and similar offences the wretched man was burnt alive. (Times had changed, since a precisely similar action ascribed to St. Columba had been extolled as a saintly miracle !)

Whatever may have been the virtue derived from these singular solar turns, we find them again and again alluded to in the history of various ancient nations.

Even in the sacred page we may trace their symbolical use ; most notably in that strange account of the miraculous siege of Jericho, when by Divine command the host of Israel was made to compass the city thirteen times in awful silence, unbroken save by the dread sound of the seven sacred trumpets borne by the seven priests who preceded the Holy Ark.

On seven successive days were Joshua and his men of war bidden to form a vast procession, escorting the priests who bore the ark, and, having marched once round the doomed city in the sight of its wondering, and doubtless mocking, people, they were then to return silently to their camp. But on the seventh day they were commanded to compass the city seven times, and when the trumpets sounded, then the whole multitude joined in a shout so mighty that

it seemed to rend the very heaven, and even as they did so the strong foundations were shaken, and the battlemented walls crumbled and fell to the ground, and the Israelites marched up straight before them and possessed the city that had been thus marvellously given into their hands.

Some idea of the mysterious virtue attached to these sunwise turns may perhaps be the reason that the Jews, in several different countries, thus march seven times round their newly-coffined dead. In Pagan records we find the same customs common to both Greeks and Romans. There is also historical evidence of their having been practised by the Gauls three thousand years ago. Virgil mentions them among the funeral rites of Pallas, when the mourners first marched thrice in sad procession round the funeral pile, then, mounting their steeds, again made the same sad circuit three times, amid wails of sorrow.

Among the Santhals (sun-worshipping aborigines of India) the corpse is carried thrice round the funeral pyre, and laid thereon; the next of kin then makes a torch of grass, and after walking three times round the pile in silence, touches the mouth of the deceased with the flaming brand, averting his own face. After this the friends and kindred gather round, all facing the south, and set fire to the pyre.

The same ceremony is observed by every devout Hindoo. In the days of suttee, now happily gone by, the wretched young widow walked thus thrice sunwise round the funeral pyre whereon lay the body of her deceased lord, before she ventured to lie down beside him, to await her horrible death. I have myself often watched either the Brahmins or the nearest relations of the dead walk thrice sunwise round the funeral pyre before they applied the torch. In their pilgrimage round the holy city of Benares and other places of pilgrimage they follow the same course.

With them, however, this homage to the sun is a natural part of their daily worship, wherein he is adored as the true light of Brahma, filling earth and heaven, the foe of darkness, the destroyer of every sin. Therefore the worshipper bows to the great cause of day, and making a turn toward the south, exclaims, "I follow the

course of the sun. As he in his course moves through the world by the way of the south, so do I, in following him, obtain the merit of a journey round the world by way of the south."

So in the Himalayas. The prayer-wheels are always turned sunwise, and it is held to be iniquitous to turn them in the opposite direction; hence the great unwillingness of the people to allow us to touch them. In Thibet also, where they build long terraces engraven with forms of adoration, there is always a path on each side of them, so that the people in passing by, may go on one side and return by the other, sunwise. When they dance round their idols, or go in procession round their temples, the same course is always followed, just as it has been in all ages by the followers of Buddha, whether in Thibet, Nepaul, Burmah, or Ceylon, where it has ever been accounted an act of merit to walk sunwise round every dagoba, or relic shrine, in the land.

Thus, too, the devout Mahomedan completes his meritorious pilgrimage to Mecca by making the circuit of the Caaba seven times sunwise.

In the Christian churches of Abyssinia the officiating priests, bearing the cross and incense, thus march three times round the altar, with slow and solemn step, at the end of each part of the service. I suppose the custom is common to all the Greek Church, as in the marriage ceremony (every part of which is thrice repeated) the young couple, having thrice drunk from the chalice and thrice kissed the cross, conclude by following the priest thrice sunwise round the altar.

All Russian sects likewise order their processions so as to follow the sun's course, and I have little doubt that some insensible trace of homage to the *deisul* has ordered the course of our own ecclesiastical processions round churches on the day of consecration, when, beginning at the east, they go round the south aisle to the west, a course which I believe is invariable, and not otherwise accounted for.

That this was the daily custom of our ancestors is well known; and at Stonehenge we can still distinguish the earthen path encompassing the temple, whereby the priests and people passed on their daily round.

We need not go far for instances of the *deisul*. At our own tables, the bottles are always sent round following the course of the sun, and to reverse their journey has always been held unlucky. Should a bottle be thoughtlessly diverted from its course, a true Highlander will turn it round before sending it on. Not that this feeling is peculiar to the north. The remark of a Lincolnshire servant concerning a helper whose waiting at table had been commended, shows that the old instinct is still alive: "Oh! I did not think much of his waiting! He went round the table against the sun."

Many quaint instances of the practice of the *deisul* are recorded in Martin's 'Tour in the Hebrides,' a curious old book published in 1690. For instance, when the men of Lewis made expeditions to the rocky island of St. Flannan, in pursuit of sea-fowl, as soon as they had effected the difficult landing, *they uncovered their heads, and made a turn sunwise*, thanking God for their safety. They then repaired to the little chapel of St. Flannan, on approaching which, they stripped off their upper garments and laid them on a great stone set there on purpose, after which they advanced *on their knees towards the chapel, and so went round the little building in procession*—just as the Hindoos in the Himalayas do now. They then set to work rock-fowling till the hour of vespers, when the same ceremony was repeated. They held it unlawful to kill any sea-bird after evening prayer, and in any case might never kill a bird with a stone.

The islanders used to say that even the birds of the air were taught by nature to follow the *deisul*; more especially noting how the puffin, on its arrival in March, makes a tour round the island sunwise, before it will settle on the ground, and observes the same ceremony before its departure in August—therefore, they said it was assuredly right that they should make a similar turn with their boat before starting for the fishery!

In Lewis Mr. Martin met the parish minister, who had just returned from his first visit to the distant Isle of St. Ronan, where the people had greeted him with the assurance that he was expected, as they had beheld him by second sight. In spite of his protests

they made their sunwise turn round him. They then slew five sheep, one for each family—and making sacks of their skins, at once filled them with barley meal, which they presented to him as being a stranger.

The idea of luck was, as we have seen, connected with the south, the right hand being described as the south hand. Therefore a bride must, at the marriage service, be led east by south, westward, to the side of her future husband; and if the young couple hope for any luck in the future, they must begin their wedded life by making a turn sunwise. Likewise at the churching of women, and at burials, this custom was commonly observed till quite recently. Every village had its luckyspot round which the dead were so carried.

It appears also as if the unaccountable prejudice against burying the dead on the north side of a church was due to the same insensible reverence for the sun (the source of all purity and light), towards whose rising the sleepers were to look as they lay with their feet turned eastward. The abode of the evil spirit lay to the north, away from the sun's gracious influences. Hence the crowd of graves invariably found on the south side of almost every country churchyard, whether in Scotland, Wales, or England, while on the north side there are probably none, save perhaps the tiny green mounds that mark the burial-place of some unbaptized infant, or the unhallowed tomb of a suicide.

The same curious fact has been remarked by antiquaries in their researches among the graves of the Ancient Britons. They tell us that in examining their burial hills, all the interments, however numerous, are invariably on the south side. Out of several hundred barrows examined in different parts of the country, only two instances are recorded in which human remains were found to the north of the tumulus.

The perpetual recurrence of the terms *east* and *west* in the mouth of a genuine Highlander of course originate in the same feeling. If you ask a man into your house, you bid him "come west," quite irrespective of the points of the compass. To bid him come east, however true geographically, would be gross insult, involving ill-luck. Once within the house, the host gives his guest a dram, and

bids him "Put it west his throat," implying good-will in the swallowing of it. A lad courting a lass is said to be "putting it west upon her."

If you bid a man take some work in hand heartily, you bid him "put it west," or "put west your foot." Hence the answer of a poor old man to whom a bolus had been recommended for his often infirmities. Being asked if he had taken it, he replied, "Na, mem ! it wadna gang east !" meaning that it was so utterly against the grain. I suppose, however, we must refer merely to the points of the compass the question lately asked us by an old woman at the post-office, whether she must stamp her letter in the east or west corner !

The only exception to this rule of good and evil luck which has ever come to my knowledge is in the case of divination by smoke, when it seems to be accounted the luckiest omen that the smoke should drift eastward towards the rising sun.

A quaint instance of this old superstition came under the notice of the minister of Nether-Lochaber in the autumn of 1872. An old man had gone to a distant market to sell a colt. He was absent so long that the wife grew anxious, more especially desiring to know whether he had been successful in getting the price they had agreed to ask for the colt. So she heaped up a big fire, and sent out her young daughter to gather a bundle of green alder boughs. These she placed on the fire ; then going outside the cottage, watched to see in what direction the smoke would drift as it issued from the chimney. It so chanced that it floated eastward, and the wife turned to her daughter well-pleased, saying she knew all was well, for she had never known that omen fail.

Nor did it do so in this case, for a few hours later the gudeman returned, having sold his colt for a price considerably higher than he had expected. It seems that the only condition necessary to working this spell is, that *the alder boughs must be gathered with definite reference to the case in point, and by the hand of a maiden*. If these two points are not rigidly observed, the augury will fail, and the smoke will drift aimlessly to and fro ; the direction of the wind is apparently a matter of no consequence ! The ever-observant

narrator of the above, adds that this particular form of witchcraft was common both among the Greeks and Romans, and was known to the students of magic as *capnomancy*, that is, divination of smoke. It seems, however, that when the priests drew auguries from the smoke of the sacrifices, the most hopeful omen was that the column of smoke should ascend direct heavenward.

Perhaps the most remarkable use of the terms east and west occurs in the old version of the creed in Gaelic, *which tells how our Lord "went East" into the place of the dead, and "went West" into Heaven.*

•(By the way, how curious in this land of rain to notice the derivation of the Gaelic word hell—*I-frin*, from *I-bhuirn*, the island of incessant rain !)

One remarkable survival of an old superstition, which is still commonly believed in throughout the North-West Highlands and Isles, is that scrofula can certainly be cured by the touch of "the seventh son of a woman, never a girl or wench being born between."

A gentleman from the Long Island states that in the Isle of Lewis it is customary for the seventh son to give a silver sixpence with a hole in it to each patient. The coin is strung, and the sufferer must constantly wear it round his neck. Should he lose it, the malady returns. Age is of no account in the exercise of this magic gift. The smallest child may heal the aged man ; all that is requisite is that some one should take the little hand and apply it to the sore.

In some cases the touch is applied "In the Name of the Most Holy Trinity, one God, Who only works cures."

Is it not somewhat startling to reflect that until the year A.D. 1719 a very solemn service was retained in our own Book of Common Prayer, to be used "At the Healing,"—that is to say, when the same work of miraculous cure was effected by the touch of the British sovereign ? The office appointed by the Church to be said on these occasions was quietly omitted from the Prayer Book by command of George I., who altogether discouraged the superstition. Yet the practice was only finally relinquished by George III.

As to the Jacobite party, they retained their faith in the Stuart



touch to the very last. Thus, when Charles Edward was at Avignon, certain sufferers were taken to him there; others were brought to him at Holyrood. Of course there was every reason why he should cling to a prerogative which belonged only to him who was king by Divine right.

For while *the ban of the Church was pronounced against all seventh sons* who dared to exercise this healing art, there was, as we have seen, a special liturgy appointed for use when the sufferers were brought to the King,—a practice sanctioned by both the Kirk and the Law, inasmuch as “daily experience doth witness that Kings and Queens do possess this special gift of God, to heall with only touching.”

This custom was first introduced by Edward the Confessor in 1058, and was continued by his successors. So we hear that Charles I. did on St. John's Day 1633 visit Holyrood Chapel, and there “heallit 100 persons, young and old, of the Cruelles, or King's Evil.”

In the days of his captivity, when a rude soldiery would not suffer the poor cripples to come near the royal person, the King prayed aloud that God would grant their petition, and that prayer, says the historian, was granted, although the touch was thus prevented. Charles II. *actually touched ninety-two thousand one hundred and seven such patients*, being an average of twelve per diem for twenty years. Verily he had “a doctor's trouble, but without the fees!”

In fact, he paid the fees, as he restored the custom of giving to each sick person a broad gold piece, instead of the “beggarly silver coin” which his predecessors had substituted for the original “fair rose-noble.” According to Wiseman, the King's physician, scarcely one instance occurred in which the Royal touch failed to accomplish a cure. Indeed, not he alone, but a host of learned divines and surgeons wrote treatises on the subject, declaring their perfect faith in this miraculous power. Even in the days of good Queen Bess, an eminent surgeon, in a professional work on the treatment of this disease, declares his confident belief that when all the other methods of cure have failed, people may expect sure relief from the touch of Her Majesty.

Nevertheless, when vain men and women dared to practise soothing mesmeric passes and "stroking," the cures which they sometimes performed were invariably attributed to witchcraft, just as magic was suspected, when the Egyptian priests of old proved that "by touching with the hands," or "stroking with gentle hands," they could immediately restore to health those to whom medicines had proved of no avail.

In early days these royal physicians signed their patients with the Cross; but this was discontinued when the wrath of Rome was fulminated against Protestant kings, to whom, nevertheless, Catholics, as well as patients of other creeds, continued to come for relief. In fact, as if to prove how powerless was the anathema of the Pope to check this gift of Heaven, we find Henry VIII. not content with miraculously curing all scrofula-stricken patients who came to him, but also such as were afflicted with cruel cramps. The former he cured by the usual royal process of stroking; while on the latter he bestowed magical rings, known as cramp rings.

So strictly orthodox, however, were these miracles, that Church and State alike clung jealously to them, as to a most precious item of regal prerogative, and so late as 1684 (while presumptuous subjects who dared to work similar cures were condemned as wizards and witches), we are told how one Thomas Russell was tried for high treason, because he had spoken with contempt of the King's touch.

The practice of bestowing on every patient a gold coin, suspended from the neck by a white ribbon, was first introduced by Henry VII. in the gladness of finding that he indeed possessed the regal gift of healing, just as truly as that poor Richard whose Divine right to the throne he failed to acknowledge.

Charles II., as we have seen, dealt out his ninety-two thousand cures and golden coins with liberal hand, but in later days a trifling silver coin was substituted. Such an one was bestowed by Queen Anne on the infant Dr. Samuel Johnson, and is still preserved as a relic by the Duke of Devonshire. It is strange, indeed, to think of the great embodiment of heavy learning having been subjected to this quaint remedy for his infantile pains. He speaks of his earliest

recollections of Queen Anne, as a lady dressed in a black hood, and glittering with diamonds, into whose awful presence he had been ushered in his infancy, that by her royal touch she might cure him of his sore disease !

The same strange power has always been claimed by the Kings of France, as part of their Divine right. So early as A.D. 481 it was practised by Clovis. And we are told that on Easter Day 1686 Lewis XIV. touched sixteen hundred people, saying to each, "*Le roy te touche, Dieu te guérisse !*"

When royalty refused any longer to practise this healing art, a substitute was found, noways flattering to the royal touch. It was discovered that rubbing the body of a patient with the dead hand of a criminal who had been executed, was a certain and instant cure for the King's Evil. Such a hand had other good qualities as well, and even in the beginning of the present century, it would sell for a considerable sum, the executioner at Newgate deriving large monies from this little perquisite.

But the corpses of criminals have ever possessed a mystic value, and they hold a distinct place in the pharmacy of our ancestors. "The moss which grows on the skull of a man that hath been hanged" possessed marvellous curative properties, and was a rare ingredient in precious salves. In Caithness and elsewhere the skull of a suicide, used as a drinking cup, was considered to be a sure cure for epilepsy, and the corpses of such were liable to be dug up in order to obtain this precious treasure. (Probably the special value attributed to ivory in the pharmacopœia of our ancestors lent additional merit to the skull.)

Perhaps in a malady so mysterious as epilepsy — one whose horrible characteristics so strangely resemble those attributed to demoniacal possession—we need scarcely wonder to find that in dealing with it the people have ever been more inclined to trust to the efficacy of propitiatory sacrifices, than to the leech's skill.

Consequently, in our own Western Highlands, and in some of the border counties, it was till very recently, quite a common ceremony to kill a cock beside the sick man, and either bury it beneath the floor of the cottage, or at least let its blood trickle into a hole in the

floor. To this was probably added some of the patient's hair, and some parings of his nails! (A curious survival of the old belief that when "one possessed" had been exorcised, the malignant spirits, driven from the heart and head, took refuge in the hair, or concealed themselves beneath the nails.)

It is not very many years since a fisherman in the flourishing town of Nairn died suddenly in an epileptic fit. The doctor being a man well loved, and who possessed the full confidence of the people, was told by the sorrowing relations that they had at least the comfort of knowing that they had done everything that was possible on his behalf. On further inquiry, he found that they had buried a cock alive beneath his bed, and they pointed out the spot, with evident satisfaction.

In the same town he was shown two spots on the public road where epileptics had fallen, and where cocks had been buried alive to appease the demon. This ceremony is in the records of earlier days described as "the *yirding* (earthing) of a *quik cok in the grund*," and is classed as a sacrifice to devils; consequently the actors will rarely confess to having taken part therein, but give an evasive answer, as if fearing to offend the Evil Power by any positive denial.

Sir James Simpson mentions several instances within his own knowledge, in which this strange remedy has been resorted to, for the cure of fits, epilepsy, and insanity. In one case a cock was killed and deposited in a hole in the kitchen floor, on the spot where a child had fallen down in a fit of convulsions; and a Ross-shire lassie told him that the neighbours were urging her mother to try the like cure for the same cause!

He also speaks of the sacrifice of cats, moles, and other animals. Thus, at Nigg, in Ross-shire, a lad being attacked with epilepsy, his friends laid on his head a plate, and above it, held a living mole, by the tail. They then cut off its head, and allowed the blood to drip on to the plate. Three moles were thus killed in succession, but without effect.

This offering a life for a life is the common Hindoo practice in cases of sickness. Various domestic animals are brought into the

room, from a belief that they will absorb the noxious principles of disease, and act as disinfectants. When they are supposed to have done their work, they are thrown from the window. Even in the case of so enlightened a prince as the young Rajah of Kolapore, whose death at Florence was a cause of so much regret, the presence of four European physicians would have been considered by no means sufficient had these traditional Hindoo prescriptions been neglected; and as the Florentine authorities might justly have objected had these wretched animals been cast from the windows into the street, they were thrown down into an open courtyard!

Among the Santhals, and various other tribes both of Northern and Southern India, it is customary in every case of dangerous illness to sacrifice a cock beside the patient, to whatever demon is supposed to have caused his malady. A live cock is also nailed to the funeral pyre.

In Algeria, the Moors and negroes drown living cocks in a sacred well, as the surest cure for epilepsy and madness.

Akin to these memories of the old pagan creeds and rites of our ancestors, are various quaint customs and superstitions which still linger in many an out-of-the-way corner of the Isles and Highlands; also a multitude of dreamy old legends and traditions, which, to some minds, may seem to be mere idle folly, but of which the most trivial details do possess a special value,—an interest deeper than their own, linking them to tales of the far East, and affording clues to guide us backward through the mazes of lost antiquarian lore. Already they are but scattered fragments, which must be carefully gathered together, by those who know their worth, for the ban of kirk and school lie heavily on all that savours of superstition. Even the old stories are losing favour; and though the young folk still listen, there are no longer such gatherings as there were a few years back, when fifty or sixty people would crowd round some Father of the Clachan to hear one wild legend after another.

One such man used to live at Broadford in the Isle of Skye, who told wondrous tales of the Elan na Fermor, Island of the Big Men, that is, the opposite Isle of Raasay, where huge bones of some extinct race of giants are still shown in the kirk.

He told also of the Picts, or little men, whose curious "bee-hive houses," built under ground, chamber within chamber, still puzzle the antiquaries in Lewis and Uist; unless, indeed, they have been content to accept Campbell of Islay's suggestion of the strange likeness between these old houses and those in common use among the little Lapps of the present day. Both are alike sunk in the ground, so that to the passer-by they appear but as grassy conical hillocks, with a hole at the top to act as chimney for the fire which burns in the centre of the hut—a chimney through which a man standing upright might suddenly thrust his head, greatly to the amazement of the passers-by.

Round these huts, say the old Gaelic fairy-tales, the little men drove their herds of wild deer, and the little women came forth to milk the hinds; just as, at the present day, the little Lapps still drive the wild deer down from the mountains and the little Lapp women milk the hinds, and give the traveller rein-deer cream in bowls of birch-wood.

And in case any foolish unbeliever should doubt, as some have doubted, the existence of rein-deer on our Scottish hills, and should venture to suggest that our wild red deer never would submit tamely to be thus herded and driven about, we refer him to the old Orkney Saga, which tells how, in the eleventh century, when Harold and Ronald, Earls of Orkney, made peace after their deadly feuds, they came over to Caithness to hunt the rein-deer; and they and their merry men feasted abundantly on their venison, and left a great store of bones, both of red deer and rein-deer, as a special legacy to Professor Owen, and for the discomfiture of the incredulous, for there the bones remain to this day.

So, after all, it is probable that the fairy tales which tell of the little people who lived in the grassy hillocks and milked the wild deer are true stories, only spiritualized by the mists of time and imagination.

The old man of Broadford was "weel acquaint" with the old wife in Lewis to whom windbound sailors told their griefs, whereupon she would give them a rope with three knots, bidding them never unfasten the third. And sure enough, when they undid the

first knot a gentle breeze would rise, and at the second there sprung up a good stiff gale ; but once a rash mariner was so mad as to undo the third, and straightway a wild hurricane swept over land and sea, and the boats were wrecked, and the men only escaped with their lives to rue their comrade's presumption. Is this not a curious nineteenth-century edition of the old accounts of the Druid priestesses of L'Isle de Sain, off Brest, who, in the days of Strabo, used to govern the winds by their wild songs, and sell a gale to all devout mariners ?

This old man would also tell how it came to pass that so many soldiers had returned safe to the Isles after the French and Spanish campaigns. All because " there was a blind man in Broadford who was able to put the charm upon them. On each in turn he laid his hands, and they went away looking straight before them. One man half turned his head and saw his own shoulder—an evil omen—and sure enough he lost that arm ; but though the balls fell round the others as thick as peas, they were nowise hurt, but returned as living proofs of the blind man's power."

As to the stories of witchcraft in the present day, they are still numberless. The old poacher told how he himself had been following a fine hart and stag in the corries, when suddenly, to his amazement, they were transformed into a man and woman. He watched them tremblingly, thanking his stars that he had not fired on them ; when, in the twinkling of an eye, he once more beheld only a couple of deer feeding in the twilight. Had he only been possessed of a silver sixpence, he would surely have had a shot at them ; but a common bullet was useless against such game, so he just stalked them for awhile, and again saw them resume their natural form, when he cautiously crept away down the glen, and was right glad to find himself once more in safe quarters !

I think, however, he must have appropriated to himself some Gaelic legend of olden times, as the same story occurs in one of the very oldest Hindoo poems, in which the Rajah Pandu goes out hunting, and shoots his arrows at a very fine stag and hind, which straightway resume human form, and appear as a Brahmin and his wife, who, turning on the luckless archer, curse him with a terrible curse.

As regards the silver bullet or coin, as a witch-antidote, its efficacy is beyond all question.

The boat-builder who knows his trade must place a crooked sixpence in the keel of every boat (and should she prove an unusually bonnie craft, her owner will probably do his best to start her on her first sail without spectators, lest any, beholding, should covet her, and so work mischief). The fishers of the good old school have full faith in the power of the silver coin to avert mischief from themselves as well as from their boats, and a sixpence placed in the heel of the stocking, is even a more important wedding ceremony, than the cross drawn on the door-post to keep off the witches.

The stories that tell how certain "ill-women" from the Isle of Raasay were turned into seals, are matters of undoubted credence.

So are a hundred instances in which (now in the present day) women spite one another, by destroying the milk of their neighbour's cow—a fact which I have again and again heard most gravely asserted in various parts of Scotland by men and women who in most respects were sensible and clear-headed enough. They believe that if only a woman can privately gather a handful of grass from the roof of her neighbour's cow-shed, all the milk will pass from her neighbour's cow to her own pail; and in proof of their superstition, they point out how so and so has invariably twice as much milk as her own cows could possibly yield, and how she always brings a double weight of butter to the market.

I must not betray the names of old friends, but I know of divers hill-side bothies where a bowl of rich cream or curds is always ready, and freely offered, greatly to the scandal of jealous neighbours, who believe it to be all the produce of the black art. One of the principal inhabitants of a northern town assured me she had, with her own eyes, seen a woman preparing to make cheese, and that all her pans were filled to the brim, though it was well known that two of her cows were dry, and a third scarcely yielding sufficient milk for the family!

Of such an one it is common to say, "Oh! she must have been *drawing the tether*;" meaning that early on Beltane morn, ere her



neighbours were astir, she had gone forth secretly, dragging her cow's tether through the dewy grass all round her field, and muttering incantations to secure good milk !

On one occasion two women were caught in the very act of brushing the May dew from the pastures with a long hair tether. They fled, leaving their tether behind them. The man who found it, hung it above the door of the cow-byre. The consequence was that the dairy-maids could not find pails enough to hold the supply of milk. But the farmer thought this was uncanny, so he burnt the rope, on which were a number of knots, every one of which exploded like a pistol-shot, in the fire. In preparing such a tether, the hair of a different cow must be used for each knot.

When under-hand dealings of this sort are suspected, a counter-charm must at once be applied. Such an one came under the notice of Mr. Carmichael, in Uist, in the summer of 1874. It is known as the *Eolan an Torranain*, or Wise-woman Wisdom, which not only insures a cow against the evil eye, but causes her to give quantities of rich milk.

The Torranain was described to him as a large snow-white blossom, growing in rocky places on the hills, which fills with the dew of bliss while the tide is flowing, and slowly dries up again during the ebbing. Therefore, to obtain the virtue of the flower, it must be gathered during the flow of the tide, and then placed under one of the milk-pails ; not, however, till it has been waved over it thrice in a sunwise circle, while slowly and solemnly chanting the *Eolas*, an incantation in which St. Columba, St. Bride, St. Oran, and St. Michael, of the high-crested steeds, are all called upon to lend their aid to win the nine blessings.

The combination of the old planet worship, traceable in the reverence for tides and the sunwise circle, with the appeal to Christian saints, is noteworthy. Mr. Carmichael's informant did not know the flower, but said she would gladly give one pound for the information, and that she had travelled far to see an old man (a descendant of the celebrated herbalists, the Bethunes of Skye, Mull, and Islay), who knows much about flowers, but his wife would

on no account allow him to tell her, and rated her soundly for daring to come to her house on such unholy missions, supposing she wanted to take away her neighbour's milk !

I believe that at the present day there is scarcely a district in the Highlands in which some unlucky old wife is not shunned by her neighbours from the conviction that she is not "canny." But so far from maltreating her, they invariably make way for her at kirk and market, never refusing anything she asks for, however inconvenient her request may be. One such old woman we knew well, whose neighbours firmly believed that she frequently assumed the form of a cat, and sat on the rafters to bewitch her husband. She had the reputation of bewitching other people besides him, and certain it is that dire evils befell those who incurred her hatred.

As to dissuading the people from consulting these weird-wives, they have ready answers in store. One woman will tell you how, when she had no family, she consulted the old *cailliach*, and soon afterwards became the joyful mother of children.

Another will tell how her milk went from her, and the witch brought it back. She can bring luck too to the herring boats, so it would be rash economy to save her puckle of meal.

Happy it is for these poor ignorant old wives that the days are gone by when the kirk sessions used to vote supplies of fuel for the burning of the witches, and when the clergy, as a matter of course, stood by the funeral pyre, not, however, to comfort the poor victims, to whose shrieks they could listen unmoved, as to those of expiring devils. Little mercy awaited them from Romish priest or Protestant minister. They were held by both alike to have renounced their baptism and so placed themselves beyond the reach of God's mercy ; and while no priest would shrive one accused of the black art, however penitent she might be, no more could the Reformers find one glimmer of hope for such an one. Luther decreed that all such must be burnt ; and John Knox stood by the fire to "mak sicker."

So admirable a thing as the destruction of a witch was held to be work meet for the day of rest, "a sanctifying" of the Sabbath !

And there were even cases of church services being omitted in order that minister and people might be present at the burning.

The brutalities to which these poor ignorant women were subjected are almost incredible, though our ancestors seem to have considered them quite right and proper.

There were actually men appointed in every district, known as prickers or witch-finders, who received from the kirk sessions and Court of Justiciary sums averaging six pounds Scots for every witch whom they discovered. In some instances the clergy themselves became witch-prickers.

It was supposed that every witch and wizard bore the devil's mark, which was simply a small discoloured spot, which would neither feel pain nor bleed, though a large pin were thrust through it. So soon, therefore, as any person was suspected of witchcraft (no matter how young and delicate a maiden, or how venerable a grand-dame), she was seized and stripped naked, bound with ropes, and pricked all over with sharp needles. Screams of agony were of no avail. The witch-pricker continued his devilish work till the exhausted victim could scream no more. Whereupon at the next thrust of the needle it was declared that the mark had been found!

Then sometimes for a whole week the tormentors took it by turns to watch, and keep the poor sufferer awake, lest in her dreams she should commune with Satan, as also in hopes of extorting semi-delirious confessions; the watchers themselves relieved guard every four-and-twenty hours.

After these preliminaries, the accused were delivered to the tormentors to extort further confessions; and every form of torture which the Arch-Fiend himself could have devised, was in turn practised upon the poor quivering flesh. They were sprinkled with boiling pitch and brimstone, which produced appalling sores—they were suspended in mid-air while burning torches were held beneath their uplifted arms. Finger-nails were wrenched off—red-hot tongs playfully gripped the bones, after burning away the flesh; the limbs were crushed with screws and hammers, while a witch-bridle (the four iron points of which pierced the tongue, the palate, and

both cheeks) was fastened on by a padlock at the back of the neck, and thus, to an iron ring in the wall.

Sometimes the swimming test was applied. The victim was dragged to a pond and thrown in with her thumbs and toes tied together. If the merciful waters would receive and drown her, her innocence was proven. But should they reject her and suffer her to float, she was guilty beyond all doubt, and the hottest bonfire must be made ready for her. Then she was dragged backwards by her hair to the court, lest by her looks she should bewitch the judges, who then solemnly pronounced sentence in the name of the most Holy Trinity. Thus, whether innocent or guilty, society was rid of the accused.

Remember that all this devilish work was actually going on in Scotland less than two hundred years ago, at which time one of the witch-prickers, who for some of his misdeeds was most righteously hanged, confessed on the gibbet "that he had illegally caused the death of one hundred and twenty females whom he had been appointed to test for witchcraft."

It certainly sounds rather as if the judges themselves had been bewitched, when we read the accounts of the successive witch-maniacs that have overspread this land. For instance, at the close of the searching reign of the Long Parliament, a list was drawn up of three thousand victims who had actually suffered death by its command on the most trivial accusations.

Even in the year 1716 it is recorded that a woman and her daughter, aged nine, were hanged at Huntingdon for selling their souls to the devil, and raising a storm, by pulling off their stockings and making a lather of soap. Six years later another luckless witch was executed at Dornoch! But I regret to say that my own county—the fair Laich of Moray—was the last to learn lessons of mercy, for *an old stone near the town of Forres marks the spot where the very last witch-burning occurred.*

It is a remarkable fact that the commencement of this diabolical persecution should have been coeval with the invention of that great civilizer, the printing-press, one of whose first missions was to disseminate a stringent bull fulminated against witchcraft by

Pope Innocent VIII., wherein, under the title of "Hammers for Witches," he minutely described how all such might be recognized, and how punished. The flame thus kindled spread like wild-fire; nor did the Reformation in any way lessen the evil.

It was not till the year 1735 that the penal statutes against witchcraft were formally repealed, a measure decried by many of the clergy and other respected members of the community as direct disobedience to the Levitical command, that no witch should be suffered to live. When the reign of fire and faggot was thus finally abolished, it was calculated that *within three hundred years, upwards of thirty thousand people* had been put to death in England alone on the charge of sorcery, while in Germany the number of victims could not have been less than *one hundred thousand!* Even such as were acquitted would in many cases have preferred death, as the mere suspicion seems to have placed them beyond the pale of human sympathy. They were outcasts for ever, hunted and cursed by all, save those who needed their arts, every conceivable form of evil being attributed to the agency of "The Devil and his Haggs."

Now, as if penitent for past cruelty, the law does what it can to protect those accused of such unholy deeds; for instance, in the autumn of 1871 a case (by no means exceptional) was tried before the sheriff, at Stornoway, for defamation, a man having formally accused a whole family of having by witchcraft stolen the milk from his cows. He stuck to his belief, and was fined five shillings and costs.

Still more frequent is the accusation of having wilfully cast the evil eye on a neighbour's goods; and our northern sheriffs have to decide many a case for slander and defamation, all turning on some such vague accusation of witchcraft. For the dread of the evil eye is just as great here as in the far East; and any one reputed to possess it, is shunned as a living plague. Quite recently, I knew an instance of the people on the beautiful west coast of Ross-shire refusing to let a woman settle among them; and they even came to the proprietor to request that he would not give her a stance (*i. e.* an allotment), because they declared she had wicked eyes. To us, the young woman and her eyes seemed rather comely and kindly.

This certainly must be an unpleasant faculty for its possessor. I was told by a very clever schoolmaster in the same district, that he had often gone fishing with one of his friends, a very good fellow, but one who was reputed to possess it involuntarily. All the other men in the boat would watch him, and when they had a fish on their lines, would try to draw it in secretly, for so surely as he observed them, their fish would get away.

We know on how many of our north-country farms the gude-wife who is busy at her churn or other household work, will bustle away her goods at the approach of any dubious stranger, because she knows that there are certain people whose presence will prevent the butter from coming, or the cakes from baking.

We know, too, how vexed a hen-wife would be should she catch us counting her chickens; and as to the experiment of counting a string of fish-wives, it would be rash indeed to try it, for dire would be the storm of tongues! Should you be cruel enough to count the fishers as they get into their boat, they will probably refuse to go to sea that night, after so evil an omen. This, however, arises rather from the old dread of numbering the people, than from fear of the evil eye.

In the autumn of 1880 Mr. Fraser of Kilmuir, in Skye, received a letter signed by the most influential members of the Free Church at Uig, complaining of a family—a mother and five daughters—who “by evil arts take the milk from the neighbours’ cows.” One woman went and spoke very solemnly to the offenders concerning their great sin, and their consciences must have smitten them, for when the reprover went home, the cows were giving their milk all right. But very soon the charm must have been laid on again, for the cows ceased giving milk.

On receiving the document, the proprietor, who was on board his yacht, asked the skipper what he thought about it. The latter replied that “he couldn’t say. His own cow had recently been thus charmed, but he knew another skeely woman, and sent for her. She came, and made a sunwise turn round the cow, and twined red worsted in its tail, *and the milk came back!* For this he paid her five shillings, but she told him that her charm would only work for

three months, and after that, if the cow ought still to be giving milk, she must be sent for again."

Again, in 1881, an office-bearer in the Free Church at Uig went to a Justice of the Peace to make affirmation on oath, that everything he had on his lands was bewitched by a woman who was his neighbour, and should be sharply dealt with at once. The J.P., however, refused to interfere.

That the will to work mischief is not always lacking, is shown by the extraordinary number of cases, scattered all over Britain, in which it has been proved that malevolent persons have made some sort of image to represent some neighbour, and have then stuck it full of pins, with a full conviction that they would thereby compass his death.<sup>1</sup>

It sounds like a story of the middle ages to hear of women sitting by their own fireside modelling images of wax in order that as these slowly melt, so he to whom they wish evil may likewise fade away. Yet such a case actually came under our notice in the good town of Inverness, where an old woman having conceived a violent hatred to her spiritual pastor on account of his refusing her admission to the Holy Communion, took this method of destroying him !!

<sup>1</sup> In a quaint old volume called 'Satan's Invisible World Discovered,' there is related the history of how "King Duff, the seventy-eighth King of Scotland, was bewitched." "The suspicion that his illness was due to witchcraft arose from an unusual sweating he was under, his body pining and withering away by little and little, and his strength failing day by day.

"Presently news came to the Court that night-meetings were kept at Forres, a town in Moray, for taking away the life of the King. Whereupon trusty and faithful men were sent away to one Donald, Governor of the Castle there, in whom the King had the greatest trust and confidence. This man discovered that a certain young woman, whose mother was reported to be skilful in this black art, had spoken some rash words anent the King's sickness, declaring that within a few days his life would be at an end.

"Some of the guard being sent, found the lass's mother, with some haggs such as herself, roasting before a small, moderate fire, the King's picture made of wax. The design of this horrid act was, that as the wax by little and little did melt away, so the King's body, by a continual sweating, might at last totally decay. The waxen images being found and broken, and these old haggs punished with death, the King did in that same moment recover."

It so happened that at that time he fell into very bad health, and as the old lady watched him growing gradually weaker and weaker, she was fully satisfied that her charm was working effectually. She was, however, doomed to disappointment, as her image was discovered and betrayed ; and her spell being broken, the victim rapidly recovered !

Two similar instances came under our notice in the same neighbourhood. Thus at Kirkhill near Beaul, in the year 1870, a farmer had occasion to dismiss a man summarily from his employment. The man owed him a grudge, and by way of avenging himself, he made an image of clay which he buried near the farmer's house, hoping that as the rains washed away the clay, his enemy would pine and die. Sure enough he did pine, and became very sickly indeed ; when lo ! one day, as he was digging in his field he found this image, and at once suspected its object, and the miscreant who had placed it there ; so wroth was he, that it needed all the persuasive eloquence of his neighbours to prevent his at once carrying the case before his landlord. Curiously enough, he is said to have recovered from that hour !

Again, also in Beaul, we heard of a man slowly dying without any apparent cause. His home was ruled by a woman of violent temper. "Ou ! she was a wild woman !" said my informant. The neighbours at last became convinced that she was compassing his death by evil arts, and sought in every direction for some wax or clay image. They found she had been sticking very suspicious lumps of clay on divers trees. However, they sought in vain for any more definite proof of guilt, and in due time the sick man died.

In Strathspey we were also told in whispered tones of this terrible form of witchcraft, as of a thing not to be doubted, and here the witches gave piquancy to their crime by sticking pins into the clay doll, before laying it in some running stream, where it may slowly but surely melt away. A calf's heart stuck full of pins is also accounted a sure means of disposing of a foe. A sick person having reason to attribute his illness to any such supernatural cause, of course appeals to some local wise woman. Amongst the sapient



cures suggested will probably be a poultice of warm cow-dung—a nice recipe, quite *à la Hindoo* !

It seems that these malpractices are neither a thing of the past, nor peculiar to the old wives of Scotland. Mackay, writing in 1841, mentions many cases of witchcraft having come under his notice in Hastings, Lincoln, and Huntingdon; most especially one of a cunning man whose ordinary business it was to mould wax images stuck full of pins, in order to destroy such persons as annoyed his customers! He also tells of a wizard near Tunbridge Wells who was constantly consulted by persons of the highest rank.

There is no need, however, to look back for such cases. So lately as May 1872, two onions, stuck full of pins, and ticketed with the name of the intended victim, were found suspended in the chimney of a public-house at the village of Rockwellgreen, Somersetshire; showing that the old tricks are not forgotten there.

Our police can tell us that such instances are by no means unique, and that this superstition, in many varying forms, is practised in Devonshire, and in the northern counties of England. About fifty years ago, a Yorkshire farmer consulted a wizard doctor in South Durham, concerning heavy losses of cattle. Of course the murrain was attributed to witchcraft, so the remedy to be applied was a counter-spell. The farmer was directed to bolt and bar every window, to keep off the warlocks. He was to take the heart of one of his dead oxen, and stick into it nine new nails, nine new pins, and nine new needles, and then slowly burn it in a fire of rowan-tree wood, just before midnight, when a certain verse from the Bible was to be pronounced over the flames, as an incantation. All this was duly observed. The enraged spirits rapped and hammered furiously at all the bolted windows, but the spell was broken, and from that hour the plague was stayed.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A curious family likeness pervades the witchcraft practised in divers lands. Moulding a waxen image in the likeness of a foe, and calling it by his name is a common practice in Abyssinia.

We find it again in India, where, in the Tinnevelly district, wooden images stuck full of sharp nails are buried near the house of a foe.

Among the little devices of modern Scotch witches, we know of a certain cat having been killed and confined, as a symbol likely to compass the death of a lady in Perthshire who had incurred the ill-will of some miscreant. The man who found this unlucky cat was very much disturbed in his mind, evidently considering it very dangerous. He was fully aware of its meaning, so it was probably by no means a unique instance.

Poor cats ! they seem to be always associated with witchery and divination, and very hard lines they get. One revolting form of augury long in use in the Isles, was that of half roasting a live cat, in the belief that its screams would attract the king of cats, who could reveal all hidden knowledge, as the price of poor pussy's release.

They also occupy a very grave place in the records of James VI., where, in the trial of the witches of Tranent, two luckless old women confessed to having christened cats by the name of Anne of Denmark and having thrown them into the sea, in order to raise such storms as might impede her voyage. Thus it came to pass that by their evil arts, a boat laden with gifts and jewels for the Queen, was wrecked in the Firth of Forth. A few years later, another witch confessed to having christened a cat by the Queen's name, and passed it nine times through the iron gate of Seaton, and then cast it to the devil. For this, and similar acts, she and four other persons were burnt alive !!

Even to this day we are sometimes startled to find persons believing, not only that certain animals are witches in disguise, but that the dead have returned to earth in these strange forms ! I have heard such stories whispered with bated breath, on our own High-

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In Hawaii the witch-women used to string together the oily ku-kui nuts, and, calling them by the name of their victim, lighted them, and let them smoulder slowly, to typify the wasting away of their representative.

In Japan a jealous woman makes an image of straw to represent her lover, and in the dead of night goes to one of the sacred trees dedicated to the Shinto gods. She nails the image to the tree, praying the gods to impute the sacrilege to her faithless lover, and vowing to remove them on his death. She returns again and again, to drive in fresh nails.

land hills, and the same traditions are common in the wilds of Cornwall, where we heard of a gamekeeper positively refusing to fire at a fox that haunted a certain house, and came constantly baying under the windows. He was not deterred by any fox-hunting scruples, but by the conviction that the animal was really "poor Mr. Frank," whose spirit returned to an earthly form, sometimes in the form of a hare, sometimes as a black-cock, but most often as a fox. No Brahmin could have been more decided in his views.

A quaint trace of the old Druidical teaching of transmigration, is the notion, not yet wholly extinct, that when a man is slowly lingering away in consumption, the fairies are on the watch to steal his soul, that they may therewith give life to some other body. To prevent this, old wives are often anxious to cut the nails of the sufferer, that they may tie up the parings in a bit of rag, and wave this precious charm thrice round his head, *deisul* !

That firm faith in the immortality of the soul undoubtedly found a place in the Celtic creed, is, I suppose, beyond question: in fact Cæsar mentions it as one of the tenets of the Druids. In the tumuli of Britain, as well as those of India, skeletons of animals have been found as if placed ready for food ; swords also that would have been precious to the living, were buried with the dead, that they might not be left defenceless on awakening.

The old Gauls buried written statements of accounts and claims of debts, that they might be carried on in the next life ; and so well was this creed acted upon, that men would lend one another money, trusting to repayment when they met in some new phase of existence !

I doubt whether modern Hindoos would be equally trusting, or the Pharisees of olden days either, of whom it is said that they too held the doctrine of transmigration. (Certainly we may infer that they did so, from the readiness with which they suggested that Christ was merely a new incarnation of Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets, and also from that strange question respecting the man who was born blind, "Did *this man* sin, or his parents, that he was *born* blind ?")

Time and space alike fail to touch on divers local superstitions.

I may, however, mention one more quaint old fret, which may have sprung from Scriptural tradition, or perhaps may own a more remote origin, namely, that curious objection to enter a house "empty, swept, and garnished," which exists in several of our northern counties. The out-going tenant, whose officious care should extend to cleaning the floor, would be held guilty of a most unneighbourly act to the new-comer. The more dirt and litter he leaves about, the better pleased is his successor. My attention was first called to this fact, on one occasion when a tidy housekeeper at "the big house" had caused a cottage close by to be scrubbed before the arrival of the new tenant, whose look of dismay on glancing round, rather astonished her. "Oh!" said the woman, "I would rather have found the dirtiest house in the country than this clean floor!" The idea is, that all the new-comer's luck has been swept out.

Shortly afterwards, a house in the same district (Speyside) was changing hands; the old housekeeper was most anxious to have everything in perfect order for its new master, but nothing would induce her to have the floors cleaned till he should have taken possession. On further inquiry we found the same superstition to be a matter of general acceptance throughout Banffshire, Nairn, and the neighbouring districts, as also in Perthshire.

There is also a lingering belief in the ill-luck of taking a farm from which the previous tenant has been ejected against his will, lest a curse should go with the land—a curse which is expressed by a peculiar Gaelic word, *eirthear*. And it was till very recently quite a natural question to inquire whether any such grudge was attached to a farm, and if so, the bargain constantly fell to the ground.

This feeling accounts for such entries in the transfer of land as that whereby, in 1698, Alexander Kinnaird, in a legal document, making over the lands of Culbyn to Duff of Drummuir, specifies twice over that he gives the bargain *his goodwill and blessing*. Not that it proved worth much, as the estate was resold forty years later, and very soon after, was overwhelmed with that mysterious sandstorm, which changed the fertile lands into the worthless desert we know so well.

## CHAPTER IX.

## THE OUTER HEBRIDES.

The Long Island—Start for Harris—St. Clement's Cathedral—Tarbert—Hand-mills—The Thamis—Fincastle—Stornoway—Loch Maddy Market—North Uist—Machars—Shell-fish and Lobsters—Fords—Driftwood—Cornish Blessings—Benbecula—South Uist—Dismal Homes—Wild Fowl—Barra—Kisimul Castle—Eriskay—Wreckers—South Bernera Lighthouse—Mingalay.

HAVING as yet had but a distant view of the Outer Hebrides, we determined that the next cruise of the *Gannet* should be in their direction. The principal islands included under this head are Lewis and Harris, which are in fact one island, being connected by a narrow neck of land, bearing the significant name of Tarbert. Lewis and Harris are generally known in the group as "The Long Island," and claim the dignity of being the third in size of the British Isles. Its population in 1881 was 28,339 persons, of whom upwards of 26,000 speak their Gaelic mother tongue, and comparatively few "have the English."

South of "The Lews," which is another name commonly applied to the Long Island, and separated from it by the deep Sound of Harris, stretches a long line of low, dull islands, which also are practically one, being all so connected by fords, that at low tide you might walk dry-footed from the northernmost to the southernmost point, whereas at high tide they are divided by deep arms of

the sea, several miles in width. These are the Isles of North Uist, Baleshare, Grimsay, Rona, Benbecula, and South Uist, together with various intermediate islets. . Sometimes the term Long Island is applied collectively to all these, as well as to the Lews.

Still further south lie the group known as "The Barra Isles,"—grand isolated masses of granitic rock, rising precipitously from the wild open ocean.

If you glance at a map of the Isles, you cannot fail to notice how very peculiar is the appearance of this great chain of islands, which, from Barra Head on the extreme south, to the Butt of Lewis in the far north, form a continuous line for about 120 miles. On the map they bear an extraordinary resemblance to a skeleton fish or reptile, of which Lewis forms the great head, while the other isles—gradually diminishing in size, and all intersected by fresh-water lochs and salt sea fiords—form the spine and bones.

Taking advantage of a favouring gale, we started from the green shores of Kilmuir, and had a glorious sail to Harris, a picturesque isle, whose mountains rise to about 3000 feet. We anchored at Rodel (or, as it used to be spelt, Rowadill), where once flourished a noted monastery, one of twenty-eight which were established in Scotland by the Canons Regular of St. Augustine, who, in later years, supplanted the more ancient and simple establishment of the Culdees.

This monastery of Rowadill seems to have been the ecclesiastical superior of the various religious houses and convents which once were scattered over these isles—the sites of certain nunneries being still pointed out as the "Teagh nan cailichan dhu," *i. e.* "the houses of the black old women," in allusion to the black dress of their order.

The fine square tower of the old church—St. Clement's Cathedral—at once drew us thither. It is a cruciform building—Early English on Norman foundations, with a fine east window and some quaint bits of carving. The tower is said to be the oldest building in Scotland, except part of St. Mungo's Cathedral at Glasgow, and those who doubt the antiquity of the kilt as now worn, may here see a most unmistakable sculpture of the garb of old Gaul. I sup-

pose the use of tartan in remote ages was well proven, even before the appearance of that quaint old metrical version of the Scriptures, still preserved at Glasgow, which told how

“ Jacob made for his son Josey,  
A tartan coat to keep him cosy ” !

We had heard much of the beautiful stones in the old church-yard, but sought for them in vain amid such a crop of nettles as I never saw elsewhere. It is a picturesque spot notwithstanding ; and when, among the golden brackens and brambly tangles, we found a rich harvest of ripe, delicious blackberries, we were content to feast like children, and were comforted for the disappearance of the old gravestones beneath so pleasant a wilderness.

This was the burial-place of certain old MacLeods of Harris, whose monuments are inside the church. One, a knight in armour with two-handed broadsword. Another sleeps in his shirt of mail and high-peaked helmet, his feet resting on his dogs. We could not get the key of the church, so failed to see the tombs of the isle and ocean lords. The tombs of the Vikings are distinguished from those of the mighty hunters, by their having a galley engraven near the hilt of the sword, whereas the latter almost invariably have deer and hounds in full cry, careering round them. One old gravestone here tells of a Sir Donald MacLeod of Berneray, who married his fourth wife when he was past eighty, and left a numerous family by her !

We had also wished to see certain old Picts' forts, or duns, which we knew existed on various hill-tops in the neighbourhood. They are simply circles of large stones piled up without cement, and always placed within sight of one another, to act as alarm-posts. The people say that a curious building of this form lies under deep water, within a few yards of the shore—and on a clear day they can see it distinctly near the village of Rodel. However, as the wind was favourable, we went on to Tarbert, a name which applies to a strip of land between two waters.<sup>1</sup>

It was nearly dark when we anchored, but at daybreak we went ashore. Five minutes' walk took us across the narrow neck of

<sup>1</sup> Tar-bert—literally, Draw-boat.

land to the other side of the coast, and we were duly edified by the primitive modes of agriculture. Here and there, in the middle of morass or peat-moss, some small scraps of arable land are carefully cultivated ; wretched little patches of potatoes, oats, or barley, struggling for existence wherever a possible corner has been found, in the midst of rock and heather. It seems like fighting against nature to try and force her to grow corn on land which she has so distinctly set apart for pasture. In point of fact, Harris is almost entirely resigned to deer.

Such morsels of ground as are under cultivation can only yield their miserable crop if freely manured every year with sea-ware, and even this supply is so scanty, that many of the poor crofters have to face the danger of stormy seas, and go all the way to Skye to obtain a boat-load.<sup>1</sup>

.. In some of the humble turf huts hereabouts you may still chance to see a specimen of the old quern or handmill, consisting of two hard gritty grindstones, laid horizontally one above the other ; the grain is poured between them, through a hole in the centre of the upper stone, which is made to revolve rapidly by a wooden handle. I suppose this was somewhat akin to the old English handmill or *Thamis*, the wood of which was wont to ignite in the hand of a swift worker, thus giving rise to the saying, concerning an idler, that "*he* would never set the *Thamis* on fire," a proverb often quoted with small thoughts of its origin.

It is strange to think that these poor little handmills should ever have been an object of jealousy to our legislators. Yet in old days various laws were passed advising the lairds to compel their tenants to bring their grain to the water-mills ; and also empowering the miller to search out and break any querns he could find, as being machines that defraud him of his toll. So far back as the thirteenth

<sup>1</sup> " The land in North Harris was only peat, which had to be manured every year with sea-ware to make it productive. *The sea-ware he had to go for to Skye in a small boat, at great risk*, and when he got safely home with his cargo in the evening, he felt as happy as if he had landed a cargo of gold. The sea-ware on their own coast was not sufficient for them. They might get it at the Sound of Harris, but it was as dangerous to go there as to Skye."—Crofter's Evidence before the Royal Commission, June 1883.



century, the laws of Alexander III. provide that no man shall presume to grind *quheit*, *maishloch*, or *rye* with handmill, except he be compelled by storm ; and even in this case he is bound to pay a certain tax to the miller !

The modern miller who cares to behold his ancient rivals may see good specimens in our antiquarian museums, without a voyage to those remote corners of the earth, but it is only here that he may still see them in active work, and hear the wild plaintive songs with which “ the two women grinding at the mill ” wile away the monotonous hours.

Wilder still are the songs sung by a whole troop of lassies when *waulking* cloth ; that is, when a dozen women sit on the ground, in two rows, feet to feet, with a ribbed woollen board between them, whereon is laid the newly-woven woollen web ; then, with their bare feet, the women work the cloth to and fro, till they have rolled it to a right consistency, their song growing louder and louder as they warm to their work, so that a casual observer is extremely apt to imagine that he has suddenly stumbled on the inmates of some private lunatic asylum.

The excellence of “ Harris tweed ” and “ Harris stockings ” is well known on the mainland, as, thanks to the fostering care of Lady Dunmore and Mrs. Thomas, these manufactures have become an organized industry, whereby most of the women of Harris earn their living. It is the means of circulating several thousand pounds a year on the isle, and forms a very important item in the support of the people, whose farming is by no means sufficient for their needs ;—no wonder when we learn that in one district of Harris 620 families are now living on the tiny crofts held by 280 tenants ! Here, as elsewhere, most of the men are chiefly dependent on their precarious earnings at the cod, ling, or lobster fisheries, or the herring fishery on the east coast ; a considerable number also serve in the Naval Reserve, or the Inverness Militia, and their pay, in many cases, is invested in the purchase of wool, which the women spin and weave in their own homes.

To this industry, therefore, is due much of such comfort as we may see by a peep into some of their little homes.

Finding that the inn owned a dog-cart (a wonderful old trap, mended at all points, but still capable of carrying us without undue danger), we hired it, and started on a long drive to the interior of the island.

We drove twelve miles through wild and most beautiful scenery ; past the dark waters of Bonaveneta Loch, and halting in Glen Mevig, to secure a rapid sketch of a grand dark hill which stands up almost precipitously from the valley. The road lay between wild moorland and mountain on the one hand, and the sea on the other ; all glorified by floods of sunshine which gleamed on the yellow sands of Laskantyra, transforming them to fields of gold. Scarcely a ripple disturbed the broad surface of the calm ocean, which broke lazily in tiny wavelets, while the dark peat-moss revealed tracts of golden brown, and green, and purple, such as no one could deem possible who only saw such scenes on the dull monotonously grey days so common to our northern skies.

In the wildest spot of all stands Fincastle,<sup>1</sup> a grand new building, placed in such a valley of rocks that a level spot had to be blasted before the foundations could be laid. A rocky mountain rises immediately behind the house—a rocky salmon river on one side, and a rocky burn on the other, always rushing and tumbling with ceaseless noise ; while the terrace in front of the windows is a great sea wall, against which the waves dash ; and the “ snorting sea-horses ” and the river-kelpies together make such a turmoil as would become wearisome to any ear but that of a keen fisher.

To the ear that rejoices in the stillness of a great calm, as the very ideal of bliss, such ceaseless sounds of tumultuous waters must, I think, be sorely trying. But it may be that what wearies the ear and brain of one man is music to his neighbour, especially if that neighbour is a whole-hearted fisherman, to whom the tumbling and tossing waters suggest the silvery fish that play beneath their depths.

We thought it a graceful compliment to Morayshire that the yellow freestone with which the house is faced had all been brought

<sup>1</sup> Built by Lord Dunmore, the late proprietor. Now the property of Sir Edward Scott.

from our own dear Cove-sea quarries. Not that there is any lack of good building material in Harris. The grey whinstone is what masons describe as “a good binding rock ;” and there is fine granite in abundance.

Attracted by the green beauty of the rich pasturage on every side among these green hills, we made sure of a delicious bowl of new milk, but not one drop was to be obtained, for love or money. So entirely were the wild deer lords of the situation, that there was no grass to spare for cows, and the people had just to do without milk. Even at Tarbert we found a most insufficient allowance—a very sore privation to men, women, and children, whose breakfast, dinner, and supper consist of porridge and oat-cake. Sometimes they have potatoes instead of porridge, but rarely both at the same meal, even in our cottages on the mainland.

Let any one who is inclined to think lightly of cutting off milk from this meagre bill of fare, just try himself to live for even one week on nothing but oatmeal, without milk, and see how much he enjoys his “daily bread !”

But here we touch on the fringe of one of the burning questions of the day—the right or wrong of the very existence of deer forests—in other words, the maintenance on our northern isles of vast tracts of land wholly devoted to the preservation of “wild beasts.”

The Islanders and Highlanders look back to idyllic days, when these wild mountain regions, wherein they dare not now set foot, for fear of disturbing the deer, were the pastures where in the sweet summer days they fed their flocks and herds—the little black cattle, and the small Highland sheep, which were regarded almost as individual friends.

Here and there were the shielings—summer homes of the very simplest construction (mere huts of turf and stone, with beds of fragrant heather), which, during those summer months, gave shelter to maids and matrons, whose pleasant task it was to milk the kye and the little ewes, and to prepare cheese and butter for the market, filling up idle moments by spinning with distaff and spindle. Those were the days which gave rise to such sweet old ballads as we still love, though the scenes which gave them birth belong to a lamented

past. Such songs as those wherein the blithe shepherd tells the secret of his bliss :

“’Tis to woo a bonnie lassie, when the kye come hame.”

What pretty pastoral pictures are suggested by

“Sae sweet the lassie sung i’ the bucht, milking the ewes” ;

or by such invitations as,

“Ca’ the ewes to the faulds, Jamie, wi’ me” ;

or,

“Will ye come to the ewe-buchts, Marion ?”

or, most melodious of all,

“Ca’ the ewes to the knowes,  
Ca’ them where the heather grows,  
Ca’ them where the burnie rows,  
My winsome dearie o.”

Now, only a shapeless pile of grey stones, scattered here and there on the high pastures, marks where stood those once joyous shielings, and in the sweet valleys, whence once rose the blue smoke from many a happy home, no sound is now heard save the bleating of the hateful big Southern sheep, or the bark of the Lowland dog which tends them.

It is to the connection of the hated Lowland sheep with the unhappy clearances, that allusion is made in the old sad song :

“The flocks of a stranger the long glens are roaming,  
Where a thousand fair homesteads smoked bonnie at gloaming ;  
Our wee crofts run wild wi’ the bracken and heather,  
And our gables stand ruinous, bare to the weather !”

For there came a time, not in the Isles alone, but throughout the Highlands, when proprietors began to realize that big farms were more lucrative than small ones, and that the new system of sheep-farming would assuredly bring in far larger returns than any hitherto dreamt of. So broad tracts of pasture-land were converted into sheep-runs, and the small farmers were displaced to make room for fewer but wealthier men. Then came the sad stories of evictions which drew tears of blood from many an honest heart, and chiefly from those weak and aged ones, condemned to end their lonely

years in poor huts on the bleak sea-coast, or crowded together in hated towns, while their able-bodied bread-winners went off to far countries, there to establish new colonies, where, to this day, the memory of the old home is cherished, and no tongue save Gaelic is spoken.<sup>1</sup>

So intimately were these sad compulsory clearances associated in the minds of the people with the introduction of the strange sheep, that on one occasion a minister in Skye, having exhausted rhetoric in describing the joys of Heaven, crowned all by touching a deeply sympathetic chord, when he declared that “as no evil thing could enter the Blessed Kingdom, THERE WOULD ASSUREDLY BE NO BIG SHEEP THERE !”

The “tooth of the big sheep” was proverbial for all evil. Nevertheless, throughout the Isles and Highlands, flocks and herds such as were never dreamt of in the days of our ancestors, now fatten peacefully on mountain pastures, covering millions of acres which heretofore were of small account, but which now represent large sources of revenue to their proprietors.

There are, however, certain districts on the mainland, notably in Kintail, in which it is affirmed that (whereas the cattle which had heretofore pastured on the hills had helped to keep the land fertile) the incessant close nibbling of the sheep has so utterly exhausted it, that it is now deemed advisable to let the ground lie fallow for a term of years. It is said that where sheep alone occupy the land, the grazings deteriorate to such an extent (notwithstanding heather-burning and drainage) that farms which in former years have supported, say, five thousand sheep, will now barely yield pasture for four thousand.

<sup>1</sup> Very characteristic were the words of a Lewis man, addressing the Royal Commission :—“He had heard from a nephew who went to America that when the Highland people met together, as they did to-day, the burden of their conversation was as to the old home they had left behind them, and they used to say that if they could, they would return to the Lews. He had it from a trustworthy man—Donald Macleod—that his sister and her husband, who were in America, were not well satisfied there, and that, though they were still young, *their heads were as white as the sea-gull*, mourning for the land of their birth.”

To allow the land to recover from this exhaustion, is the reason now assigned by one proprietor for a considerable extension of his deer forest in part of Ross-shire, though it might well be thought that these already occupied their full share of the land, inasmuch as the twenty-five deer-forests of Ross-shire cover one third of the whole county.

(It is stated that deer-forests and sheep-runs together occupy two-thirds of the Highlands. Of the former it has been recently said: "They extend in an almost unbroken line from the southern borders of Perthshire to the shores of the Pentland Firth, and embrace an area of over two million acres of some of the best pasturage in the Highlands. Within this vast space absolute silence reigns. Sheep and cattle are of course rigidly excluded, and the only human occupants are a few gillies." The writer might have added that the artist, the poet, and he who would seek new bodily and mental strength in those beautiful and health-giving mountain regions, are all alike jealously excluded, lest their human presence should disturb the wild deer, and spoil the sport of the few.)

But in listening to the tale of woe and of want which has been poured into the ears of the Royal Commissioners, appointed to inquire into the condition of the poor islanders in May 1883 (when we have heard the pitiful stories of how, about thirty years ago, the inhabitants of innumerable townships were evicted from the lands which they had brought under cultivation, and which yielded fair returns—and of the people being compelled to settle on worthless peat-moss, or to subdivide the small crofts already in possession of other men, and to eke out a wretched living by twice a day following the receding tide, in search of limpets and other shell-fish), we cannot but sympathize with the speaker who, alluding to the old blithe days in the summer shielings, days of comparative abundance, says: "It is unseemly that the big sheep should be dying of fatness alongside of us, and we, the people, be driven from the land of our fathers to seek to provide our living on the face of the sea,"—a living which they can scarcely contrive to procure, and which most men would deem well-nigh starvation.

Truly it is pitiful to hear the accusation of "extravagance"

which, in the course of this inquiry, some witnesses have brought against their poorer neighbours, and then to learn that this refers to their indulging in a little weak tea—possibly, if they can afford it, with the addition of a little sugar as their only substitute for the milk of which they and their children have been entirely deprived by the loss of the pastures. This extravagant beverage—a little weak tea without milk—is all they have to wash down their hardly-earned porridge; and so deleterious to the little ones is this found to be, that the doctor of one district strongly recommends the adoption of cheap beer instead of tea—a lamentable, sole alternative, while the tempting pasture-lands lie outspread on every side.<sup>1</sup>

A hard struggle, in truth, have all these poor folk to obtain their

<sup>1</sup> The worst of it is, that this cheap luxury of tea is only obtained by the sacrifice of their few eggs. It seems difficult for us to realize a breakfast at which we should have to choose between a cup of milkless tea or an egg!

Here is a bit of medical evidence given before the Royal Commission:

Q.—Has it come within your notice that the children are physically in want of milk? A.—They have nothing like a command of milk. Even the cows that have calved are giving little or no milk, and *the calves require to be fed with meal and other food*. It is a difficulty with me in treating these people when I recommend them to have milk. They say they cannot get it.

One of the common diseases of the country is dyspepsia. There is scarcely a patient who comes to me who is not dyspeptic. It is caused by the large quantities of oatmeal which they eat without any other food.

Q.—Can you suggest any other diet within the reach of the people? A.—*If they would not sell their eggs for tea, and if they would use them themselves*. They sell their eggs to the local merchants, and they have been getting 8d. a dozen for them.

One of the crofters is questioned on this sale of eggs.

Q.—Do you not keep a good many hens? A.—I did not count the number we have, but I do not think it is more than five or six.

Q.—Is it not profitable to keep hens? A.—*If we kept many of them we would have to buy food for them from Glasgow*, and there would not be much profit then.

Q.—Do you think a man would be able to get as many eggs as would enable him to pay his rent? A.—They would not keep him in tobacco. *The women get the money*.

Q.—*And I suppose that goes for tea?* A.—Yes, that is it exactly. *They can't do otherwise, they can't eat their bread dry. They must have something to wash it down, and they can't get anything else.*

daily bread, and the evidence of one and all goes to prove that their poor little crofts (with soil exhausted by eighty or a hundred years of incessant tillage) will no longer yield them sufficient food to keep their families for more than perhaps a couple of months in the year ; so it is a matter of perpetual anxiety how to provide the oatmeal necessary for the remaining months, either by precarious toil at the fisheries, or at any other work that can be obtained.

Yet while all corners of the Isles are overshadowed by this ever-deepening cloud of poverty, the actual market value of the land has increased at a rate altogether astounding. This very district of Harris (a tract of about twenty-four miles in length, by seven in breadth) was, in the last century, sold by Macleod of Macleod for the sum of £15,000 to a son of Sir Norman Macleod of Bernera. In the beginning of the present century it was purchased by Lord Dunmore for £60,000, and only a few years ago, half the estate was bought by Sir Edward Scott of Ardvourlie as a deer-forest, for about £155,000, an investment which, while it shows a nominal rental of £2200, in point of fact yields small pecuniary return, and, on the contrary, calls for an annual outlay of large sums, amounting in one year to £6000 ! No wonder that Sir Edward was described to the Royal Commissioners as “a generous Englishman of the highest type !” Few Highland proprietors could emulate such an example, and yet, with all the assistance they have received, the people of Harris are now in a state of as great distress as any of their neighbours.

We deemed ourselves fortunate in having seen the country in sunshine.

Ere we started to retrace our way to Tarbert, the scene had utterly changed. Leaden-hued clouds rested on the summits of the dark hills, and soon rolled down their sides, shutting out the last gleam of sunlight. Then came the rain—no gentle summer showers, but pitiless sheets of drenching rain, falling in torrents, and hiding from us every trace of the beautiful scenery around. It poured without intermission till after midnight, and we were all drenched.

A genuine Highlander will tell you that a thoroughly wet plaid is the warmest thing in the world, as the swollen wool can keep



out the cold, and keep in the heat, twice as well as when dry ; and if he has the luck of an extra wrap to throw on outside of all, he asks no warmer bedding ! Happily for us, a good store of dry clothing awaited us in the yacht, and the weeping of night was forgotten when, at dawn, we awoke to the consciousness of another day of unclouded glory such as seems to me never to shine so brightly as in these Isles.

We were much tempted to make our next expedition northward to the Isle of Lewis, calling at Stornoway, there to see how art and wealth combined have triumphed over bleak nature in producing such wonderful gardens round the modern castle—gardens where every bit of rock is turned to picturesque account ; where roses are made to blossom in long glass passages, and where figs and bananas and grapes ripen in profusion in stoves and hot-houses.

In the year 1844 Sir James Matheson purchased this naturally unattractive isle, which has been well compared to “a wet peat on a stone,” so wholly is it composed of peat-bogs and rock. Vast sums of money have been devoted to the improvement of this very unpromising soil ; 890 acres of peat-moss having been reclaimed and converted into arable land, and on this one item (together with the building of farm-houses and offices) no less than £100,000 have been expended.

And this is but one detail of the many schemes whereby a wealthy proprietor sought to benefit his land and his people. He established free schools in all parts of his property ; and in the first twenty-six years he found that he had spent no less than £11,680 on school-buildings and teachers' salaries. Twenty-five thousand pounds more were expended on the construction of two hundred miles of roads and bridges ; and enormous sums on all manner of works for the improvement of Stornoway—building curing-houses for their fisheries, introducing gas and water. Thirty-three thousand pounds went to starting great chemical works, £6000 to a patent slip, £2225 to constructing a quay for the steamers, which Sir James first chartered at his own expense, as, before his day, the Iews had been dependent for all communication with the mainland on a sailing mail-packet. Sir James's actual personal losses on these

various steamboat transactions are represented by sums of £15,000 and £167,000!<sup>1</sup>

It has been so gravely asserted that all this vast outlay has proved wholly unremunerative, that it is satisfactory to learn that the total rental of the estate has increased from under £11,000 in A.D. 1844 to upwards of £18,000 in 1883. Of this sum, £12,700 is paid as land-rent, and £3700 for shootings.

The special interest of these details lies in the fact that this Isle of Lewis is the very centre of some of the most perplexing problems of social economy in the present day. For while wealth has thus been poured out like water on the thirsty land, the actual condition of the people has gone on steadily deteriorating. Within the last century their numbers have about trebled, and their poverty seems to have increased in the same ratio, so that at the present time the people of Lewis are plunged in deepest depths of destitution, and the rates of Stornoway are said to have reached the astounding figure of 9s. 4d. in the pound!!

One of the most painful features in the recent inquiry into the condition of these really poor people, was the loud assertion, by those purporting to plead their cause, that "nothing has been done for them" by the proprietors. It was then mentioned incidentally, that in addition to the enormous sums which in the last forty years have been expended on the isle by Sir James, Lady Matheson annually bestows £50 on private charity in *each of the many parishes*, besides an annual gift of £100 worth of potatoes, while this year she has contributed £1500 to the destitution fund and £1500 to the construction of Ness Harbour, for the express purpose of providing work for the people. But these trifles are of small account in the eyes of such popular orators as have recently busied themselves in stirring up discontent and dissension throughout the North-Western Isles and Highlands.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Statement of Mr. Mackay, Chamberlain to Sir James Matheson.

<sup>2</sup> The method adopted to kindle these incendiary sparks is very clearly suggested by the concluding paragraph of a note addressed by the Secretary of the Lewis "Highland Land Law Reform Association" to the Secretary to the Royal Commission on the Highlands and Islands:—<sup>1</sup>

Though no special beauty of scenery attracted us northward, we would fain have sailed round the stormy Butt of Lewis, to visit the primitive people of Barvas, whose rude home-made pottery we had seen treasured in museums, and might very naturally have attributed to the Ancient Britons! And from Barvas we would have passed on to Loch Bernera, to see the Druidic remains at Callernish, where several concentric circles, and also a semi-circular group of monoliths, with various tumuli and other rude stone monuments, remain to puzzle antiquaries with suggestions of the secrets of by-gone ages.

The solemn silent witnesses  
Of ancient days—altars or graves.

But whatever temptations were offered by Lewis, a scene of more animated interest invited us southward, to North Uist, where a great cattle-market was to be held on the low flat shores of Loch Maddy, a strange sea-loch, to which the entrance is by a narrow opening, guarded, as it were, by two great masses of basalt, which jut up from the sea, and are remarkable as being the only basalt

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“*Lewis Highland L. L. R. Association,*  
“*Stornoway, 12th June, 1883.*

“SIR,—On behalf of our Association, I beg to express our gratitude to your Royal Commission for the very patient hearing they were pleased to give to the delegates freely elected by the crofters as their representatives to appear before you. *We had some trouble in getting the island roused to a sense of its responsibility, but that is all that we did, or mean to do.*—I have the honour to be, sir, your obedient servant,

“WALTER ROSE, Secretary.

“M. M'Neill, Esq., Secretary to Royal Commissioners.”

The spokesman of this Society, Mr. A. Morrison, found himself in a very awkward position when compelled by the Royal Commissioners to reduce his high-sounding general statements and demands to sober detail. He had loudly asserted that there was ample land on Lewis to provide farms of a given size for a population of 60,000 or 70,000 persons, and keep them all in comfort, whereas at present a population of some 20,000 can barely exist. When compelled to face the question in detail, it was proved that his demands would require no less than 3,500,000 acres, and vast flocks and herds—whereas the total area of Lewis is but 404,000 acres! consisting chiefly of peat-moss!!!

within many hours' sail. These are called Maddies, or watch-dogs. Hence the name of the sea-loch, which extends inland in every direction, its endless ramifications forming innumerable fiords, which intersect the land with the strangest network of channels.

In such a labyrinth of land and water, locomotion is indeed a difficult matter, for he who starts on foot finds that at every hundred yards he is stopped by a salt-water stream, while travelling by boat is even more slow and wearisome. Here and there, however, the creeks narrow so strangely that they are no wider than streams, and have accordingly been spanned by roughly-constructed bridges.

It was no easy matter to find a piece of sufficiently connected land to form a suitable site for the great cattle-market, and even that selected was a strangely-blended bit of land and sea. I doubt if any other spot could show so picturesque a cattle-fair. In the first place, all the cattle had to be brought from neighbouring isles to this common centre, and, as each boat arrived, with its rich brown sails and living cargo of wild rough Highland cattle of all possible colours, the unloading was summarily accomplished by just throwing them overboard and leaving them to swim ashore.

These island beasties take kindly to the salt water, and seemed to rejoice in finding cool bathing-places on every side. All day long there were groups of them standing in the water or on the shore that made me long for the brush of a *Rosa Bonheur*—such attractive combinations of rich warm colour—silvery-greys and reds, browns and blacks, rich sienna and pale sand-colour, all reflected in the pale aquamarine water. In the whole market there was not a beast that was not individually a study for an artist, with its wide-spreading horns, and rough shaggy coat, and its large, soft, heavily-fringed eyes, that seemed to look so wonderingly on the unwonted assemblage round them.

Besides the fishers' brown-sailed boats, several tiny white-winged yachts had brought customers to the market and added to the general stir—a stir which must have so amazed the lone sea-birds, which are wont to claim these waters as their own, for, as a general rule, a more utterly lonely spot than this dull flat shore could scarcely be found.

Now, however, an incredible number of islanders had assembled. It seemed a fair matter for wonder where they could all have come from, but a tidier, more respectable lot of people I have never seen. These people of North Uist—now, alas! like their neighbours, so sorely oppressed by downright want—generally rank among the most prosperous of the Outer Islesmen, their patient industry being proverbial.

Frugal as Chinamen, these careful folk deem no work too trivial if they can by any means thereby turn an honest penny.

Thus while many of their neighbours are hopelessly in arrears of rent (the majority of the crofters on Barra being five years, and those on Mingalay ten years in arrears), the men of North Uist have kept well up to the mark. It is also worthy of note, that notwithstanding great hardships, consequent on evictions in bygone years, their houses, built by themselves, are of an unusually good type, most of them having separate outhouses for their cattle.

Most of the four thousand inhabitants of North Uist live on the further side of the isle, and had come across in the rudest of little carts, drawn by shaggy ponies, whose harness was the most primitive combination of bits of old rope, connected by twists of the strong wiry grass of the sand-hills (bent, we call it on the east coast). Now the carts were tilted up, and watched over by wise collie-dogs, while the ponies were turned loose to graze on the heather. Indeed, the number of these was a noteworthy feature in the scene, for these rough little creatures find their own living on the moor, whence their owners must cut, and the ponies must carry, the peats which are the sole fuel of the isles. Hitherto they have also helped the kelp-burners, in carrying the heavy wet sea-weed to a safe drying ground, but that harvest of the sea is no longer to be garnered.

Most fortunately for us all, the weather was glorious; indeed, the blazing sun, reflected by the still waters, made us long for shelter, but not a rock or a bush was there to break the monotony of the flat shore. The only morsels of shade lay beneath the few white booths set up by itinerant merchants, that lads and lasses might buy their fairings, and that the drovers might get their dram

—the latter being a very important item in the day's pleasure, for the Blue Ribbon Army has not yet weaned the islesmen from their love of mountain-dew; and of the only two manufactories established in the Isles, one is a good woollen factory at Portree, but the other is a distillery at Tallisker, in the Isle of Skye, which turns out forty-five thousand gallons of whisky per annum, of which about twenty thousand are consumed on the Isle of Skye itself.

Naturally, there was a liberal consumption of "the barley bree" at the market, but, the consumers being all hardened vessels, no one appeared any the worse, nor even any the livelier—and liveliness is by no means a characteristic of these gentle quiet folk, most of whom seem to be naturally of a somewhat melancholy temperament. Men and women alike have a grave expression—not exactly careworn, for in truth they are generally ready to accept their hardships with amazing philosophy, but a far-away look, as those whose life-long teachers have been the winds and waves,—solemn spiritual influences which have sunk deep into their souls. As are the physical surroundings, so is the reflex, on the character of a race strangely sensitive to all that can suggest dreamy visions of the unseen,—a people whose cradle-songs have been the wild lays of Ossian, sung to eerie Gaelic airs, pathetic and mournful as the mingled sounds in nature which they so faithfully reproduce—the moaning of the winds, the wild cry of sea-birds, the deep booming of the waves, the thunder echoing amid the mountains.

Faithfully do these nature-taught islanders live in harmony with her lessons. As the influences of nature in calm are ever soothing, and those of storm are solemnizing, so the tendency of the people is to quiet thoughtfulness, as though life were altogether grave and sad. Yet at a pleasant word the whole face brightens with a beaming smile, just as does the face of their native moorland, when glorified by a gleam of radiant sunlight. But anything of the nature of boisterous mirth would seem utterly out of keeping with the character of place or people—well-nigh as jarring as a sound of laughter in a cathedral.

A whole-hearted son of the Isles has just told me that I have

misinterpreted his countrymen, and that the gravity is a quality of modern growth, carefully fostered by "Free Kirk" influences. He maintains that the true nature is that which only peeps out occasionally, when the barley-bree has shaken off the acquired gravity, and encouraged the singing of rollicking songs and dancing in the energetic fashion of olden days, compared with which our most inspiring "Reels of Tulloch" are tame indeed.

I am bound to believe these words of a true Gael, but I speak of the people as they seemed to me, and this great cattle-market afforded a very fair opportunity for judging.

The only sensible folk who had made provision against sun or rain were some wise old women, possessed of large bright blue umbrellas, beneath the shadow of which they sat on the parched grass. They were comfortably dressed in dark-blue homespun, with scarlet plaids and white mutches, and near them grazed several sand-coloured ponies, forming a pretty bit of colour.

Behind them groups of bright, healthy-looking lads and lasses were assembled round the white booths, and all along the yellow shore faint wreaths of white smoke from the kelp-fires seemed to blend the blues of sea and sky; for the blessed boon of sunshine was too precious to be wasted even in a holiday to Loch Maddy Fair, and the kelp-burners dared not risk the loss of one sunny day, for here, in North Uist, the industry of kelp-burning was continued till quite recently—that toiling harvest, whose returns are now so small, and always so uncertain, that the men of Skye have, for a good many years, altogether abandoned it. This is partly due to the fact that the sea-weed of Skye contains a much smaller proportion of the precious salts which give it value, than does the weed on some other isles, consequently it fetched a lower price. Now even these industrious kelp-burners of Uist have given up the work, though the loss of the pittance they thus earned is most seriously felt.

Loch Maddy itself is a most extraordinary place—quite unique, I should say—with the endless ramifications of its dreary salt-water lochs, winding in and out in every direction in countless little fiords, some of which run inland for nine miles, so that although the loch

only covers about ten square miles, its coast line actually exceeds three hundred miles. It has been compared to the pattern of fairy frost on a window-pane, or to an outspread branch of sea-weed, whose countless leaves and stems represent the number of creeks and fiords that spread in every direction. On this occasion it looked its very best, bathed in a flood of hot sunshine ; but, on a dull misty day, or after prolonged rains, it must be dreary beyond description, when the sad-coloured land, and the almost motionless sea, seem so blended as to have no clear boundaries, but are simply a sort of amphibious creation ; where the monotonous creeks are all discoloured by the mud washed down from the low dull shores—very desolate and depressing. There are indeed ranges of moorland which attain to a height of seven hundred feet, but they are so shapeless as to lend no feature of beauty to the scene.

It is a strangely wild, eerie place, the haunt of all manner of man-hating creatures. Even the shy seal ventures up these silent creeks, and lies basking on the rocks which the tide has left bare ; and as to the sea-birds, they know every turn of the winding waters, and the quiet nooks where they may rear their downy broods in perfect safety.

We lingered for several hours amid the mingled throng of islanders and their cattle. Then we rowed away in a small boat to explore some of the winding fiords, never knowing how far inland we might penetrate. Sometimes floating dreamily along, passing one moment through a channel as narrow as it was shallow, then opening into a deep, wide, brackish lagoon ; an eerie place in rainy weather, but to-day all glorified by the light that gilds each weed and broken bank ! Overhead hovered a cloud of restless birds, breaking the dreamy silence with the wild clamour of their querulous cries ; and along the reedy shore a mother eider duck was teaching her fluffy young ones the art of swimming. But the seals had been driven far away by the stir of the market, though no sound could reach these quiet havens, where no tempestuous waves breathe exhilarating life and action, but all is still and well-nigh pulseless.

We paddled idly along, drinking in the perfect stillness of the glad sunshine ; watching its glancing rays reflected from the water



on the shadowy rock face, in rippling trickles of light. Here and there long tendrils of honeysuckle trailed almost to the water's edge, and ever and anon the quick motion of large white wings stirred the breathless air, and honeyed fragrance of the woodbine came wafted towards us, like some whisper of Heaven—some “sweet thought in a dream.”

Then once more turning towards the more open sea, we watched the sunlight playing on the opal waters, which, defying all vulgar theories of colour, vary their tints according to some law of their own, changing from deepest blue to clearest green, or richest purple, according as the white sand or the golden sea-weed are the hidden treasures that lie beneath their depths. The yellower the tangle, the deeper the purple; and lest you should be tempted to doubt the secret of that strange rich colouring, here and there some tall giant of that marine forest raises its head to the upper world, and its glossy fronds float on the surface in lines of quivering light.

Strangers sometimes speak pityingly of the wearisome monotony of a life lived in these Isles. I cannot myself think that any life so encompassed by the ceaseless varieties of ocean can compare with the dull depressing sameness of existence in any agricultural or mining district on the mainland, where, from one year's end to another, all goes on in regular mechanical order, each day recalling the last, and the ugliness of all around, knowing no change.

Here, even the black peat-moss (which, when sodden by prolonged rains, is so unutterably dreary) changes as if by magic in the clear shining that comes after the rain, revealing a wealth of rich colour, of purple heather and golden lichens, silken-tufted grasses and delicate moorland flowers, dear to the busy, humming bees, but dearer still to the human children who, all unconsciously, drink in these sweet influences, which tend to mould their character for life. He who knows the delight of roaming alone in such wild regions, of watching the tremulous white mists float upward from the dark peat bog, to enfold and spiritualize the great sleepy hills, can perhaps realize why it is that these Children of the Mist are so dreamy and unpractical as compared with their Anglo-Saxon neighbours.

But of all influences which combine to produce the Hebridean as he is, none approaches the ever-present power of the ocean, which, as a living inspiration, is for ever and for ever whispering its messages to man, woman, and child, from their cradle till the hour when they are laid beneath the green turf within sound of its ceaseless dirges. It claims its right to keep watch over the islanders in death as in life, and steals quietly inland that it may leave none unsought.

As though the salt sea did not monopolize enough of the land, there are also numerous brackish lochs of so-called fresh water. Many, however, are really fresh, being in fact just chronic pools formed by the ever-renewed rains, which drain through the peat-moss, and so acquire that rich clear-brown hue, varying from the colour of treacle to that of London porter. Strange to say, these dark-brown pools abound in trout—hermit colonies. One marvels how they came there, inasmuch as few of these lochs have any inlet.

Some of them are studded with small islets, on which are the remains of Pictish duns. It is said there are about twenty of these in North Uist alone. They are circular, and of the rudest construction, being connected with the land by stone causeways, which are still visible above the water level.

These lochs have sedgy shores, and are covered with white and yellow water-lilies, amid whose fairy blossoms skim radiant dragon-flies of every hue.

The lilies are very precious to the islanders, who use their roots for dyeing wool. Another rich brown dye is obtained from some of the dark mosses and lichens that make such kindly coverings for the cold rocks. Heather yields a yellow colour, and a warm red is extracted from the common bramble.

But the most beautiful dye of all is procured from a kind of rue, with golden blossoms, which grows on the sandy shores. Its long tough roots when powdered and boiled, produce an excellent red dye, but they are also so valuable for binding the said sand, that it is illegal to uproot this plant. The people, however, tell of one vain woman who, in her longing to procure this rich red dye,

went out by night to gather it, in defiance of her husband's prohibition. She was never seen again, but soon afterwards the northern sky was red with such flashing lights as had never been heard of, and all the islanders believe assuredly that the spirit of the woman had good cause to rue that red dye! The Hebrideans are by no means the only race who watch the fluttering of those eerie spirit-fires with something of awe. The Greenlanders believe the northern lights to be the spirits of their forefathers going forth to battle. And to all dwellers on the west coast the aurora brings a certain warning of much rain and storm approaching. So surely as "the sable skirts of night" are fringed with that celestial light, and the dark midnight wears her luminous crown of flashing rays, so surely is foul weather in store, and the wise among the people make provision accordingly.

The island of North Uist is now the property of Sir John Campbell Orde, having been purchased from Lord Macdonald's trustees about thirty years ago. It is about sixteen miles in length, by seven in breadth.

All the east coast of North Uist is the same sort of dreary, boggy, mossy, peaty soil, with weary, uninteresting, low creeks and inlets. The west coast, however, is far more smiling, and offers possibilities of cultivation on a small scale, so there all the inhabitants are to be found. All along the shore are wide white sands, beautiful on a calm day, but liable to drift over the cultivated lands. The aim of the people is, therefore, to cultivate the wiry bent grass, which spreads its long clinging roots, and makes such a mat as binds the sand and keeps it in its place. After awhile a thin crust of soil forms over these roots, and eventually finer grasses find a livelihood on these *machars*, as this sandy soil is called. The tussac grass is one which is said to take kindly to the double task of feeding the flocks and binding the sands. Nevertheless the *machars* are dangerous neighbours, and there is always danger lest, in years of scarcity, the flocks may nibble these grasses too closely, and so break this protecting surface, forming a little rent, which the winds are certain to discover, and very quickly enlarge, and one stormy night may produce such wild drifts as will leave promising fields

sown with more sand than the poor farmer need ever hope to get rid of.

This is said to have been the cause of that overwhelming sand-drift which converted the fertile lands of Culbyn, in Morayshire, into that vast chain of sand-hills which now extends along the coast. Seven disastrous years of famine had reduced the people to such extremity of poverty, that they were driven to collect fuel where and how they could. Thus the broom and bent grass which had hitherto bound the shore were all torn up, and the wind catching the sand, blew it in thick clouds upwards of twenty-five miles along the coast, burying thousands of acres beneath this deep, ever-shifting sand desert.

Happily for the islanders, the sand thus carried is not all destructive. The whitest sands are formed entirely of shells, ground to the finest powder by the pitiless action of the waves. These, of course, are pure lime, and act as a very useful manure, enriching all manner of crops. You can generally tell the little islands where the shell-sand is most abundant by the richness of the grass, and the fragrance of the sweet white clover which scents the air.

On some islands protected from the fury of the Atlantic, the shells lie unbroken in countless myriads. On one such we landed, near the coast of Ross-shire (the Saint's Island, protected by the Isles of Raasay and Skye), where, to the depth of many feet, the little shells lie heaped up, each quite perfect, a quarry of shell-gravel. There are no pebbles, no sand, nothing but shells closely packed together in inexhaustible store; little shells which were once silvery, or bright yellow and brown, but are now bleached by perhaps centuries of exposure to pitiless rains and blazing sun. Only a silvery sparkle remains to tell of the pearly things they once were. Above them is a light crust of earth, on which the greenest of verdant pasture shows how well the shell-lime acts.

The cultivation of the *machars* is not the sole means taken to prevent the encroachments of the sea. In some places, more especially in the Lews, tracts of land have actually been reclaimed, and the tide shut out by flood-gates, in Dutch fashion.

On the other hand, it is quite certain that the sea now covers

various shores where villages and even forests have stood. For instance, on the green island of Vallay, lying north of Uist, there are traces of very fine timber and mossy ground lying below high-water mark. Now there is neither moor nor moss on the island, only rich green pasture lands, and shallow fresh-water lochs, on whose gleaming surface float myriad white and golden water-lilies; creamy blossoms, resting on their own glossy leaves, with young buds nestling around; buds that even in the depths of the "dim water world" have been all unconsciously seeking the glorious light above them; mysteriously drawn upward to do it homage, and never swerving to the right hand or the left till they have found it, and their pure hearts silently expand toward the great calm heaven, which broods on every side, and lies reflected in the clear surface of the waters. Truly an image of peace unutterable.

On one of these quiet lochs there is a tiny green island which is the favourite haunt of the deer; they swim across in the moonlight, to this, their chosen sanctuary, where they are rarely molested.

One solitary farm-house represents human life on this isolated shore, which is connected with North Uist by one of those strange fords that link together so many of these islands, affording a secure road on *terra firma* at certain hours of the day, while a little sooner or later, a strong tide rushes along in foaming currents, covering the ford to the depth of eight or ten feet with salt waves—and bringing with it a vast store of all manner of shell-fish, which forms a very important item in the harvest of the islanders. As soon as the tide recedes, a great number of people betake themselves to the shore, with their creels, and their rough little ponies—knowing that a good tide will bring them far more than they can carry, of cockles and mussels, periwinkles and limpets, razor-fish and clams, and all manner of odds and ends besides.

The abundance of cockles and periwinkles is almost inconceivable. Of the latter from twenty to thirty tons are despatched to London every week, by the steamers, *viâ* Glasgow; and go to replenish the stalls of the old wives at the street corners. Oysters from Scalpa and Loch Snizort also find their way there—and vast numbers of lobsters, dragged from their rocky homes on the wild coast of

Harris, are likewise carried off alive. Poor prisoners, their claws are tied up to prevent their fighting by the way—and they are packed together in one great compact black and blue mass of twisting, struggling life, and thus they are transported to the boiling-houses near Billingsgate, where they meet with a vast army of their Norwegian brethren, and all share the same sad fate. Perhaps twenty thousand arrive from Norway in one night, while the Western Isles furnish an average of fifteen thousand per week, and in some instances, more than double that number.

Shades of lobster salads! what food for nightmares rises before us, at the thought of so terrible an array of vengeful, cold-blooded monsters, clad in panoply of blue-grey armour, standing over us with those awful claws uplifted, ready, at the bidding of Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid, to plunge us into those horrible boilers, and avenge their luckless parents and kinsfolk.

The lobster fisheries are more profitable now than in the last century, when about seventy thousand were annually sent from the coast of Montrose to London, and there sold at prices varying from three halfpence to twopence halfpenny! Almost as cheap diet as salmon, which varied from three halfpence to twopence a pound! Those were the days when Scotch servants stipulated that they should not be obliged to dine on salmon more than three days in the week!<sup>1</sup> Now the fishers receive from 9s. to 16s. a dozen, for lobsters, and the boats engaged in these fisheries can clear from £4 to £10 in a season.

Another large item in the contributions of the Isles to the mainland, is a vast supply of eggs—not for human food, but to be used in the Glasgow callandring works, to produce the glaze on chintz. It seems that freshness is no object, so every old wife lets her eggs accumulate till she has enough to be worth carrying to the “merchant.” Her unpleasant store reminds me of our old Skye henwife, who said she always gave the nest-eggs to her own bairns. When we suggested that they must be slightly objectionable, she replied,

<sup>1</sup> As an instance of change in the value of money, I may note an entry in the household expenses of Edward I., to the effect that eighteen pence had been paid for four hundred Easter eggs!

“Weel, maybe they’re just some snuffy !” I suppose that nest-eggs, like some other dainties, require an educated taste. So we also thought, when tasting the razor-fish or “spout-fish,” which the fisher-folk consider so nutritious. Not all the art of a French cook could make those leathery lumps palatable !

The said razor-fish, so called from his inhabiting the long brown razor shells that strew our shores, but which is more correctly called “solen,” is, however, a very valuable bait, and as such, is sought even more eagerly than for human consumption. He lies safely hidden beneath the sands, and so soon as he hears a step approaching, he digs a deeper hiding-place, and burrows his way lower and lower. But at the first alarm he spouts a jet of water in the air, like a tiny whale, and thus betrays his presence to the watchful bait-gatherer, who, from this custom, calls his hidden treasure the spout-fish. Plunging a barbed iron rod into the moist sand, he fishes up his victim ; should he fail to strike him, he knows he need not try a second time, as the creature will have burrowed far beyond his reach ; but, if bait is scarce, he will perhaps sprinkle salt on the hole, and then wait patiently till the solen rises to the surface, and is captured, to prove an irresistible dainty to all manner of fish.

The fords on all sides give a very curious character to this coast. It seems so strange to be for ever calculating tides—high-tide and low-tide—spring-tide and neap ; with the knowledge that sometimes the safe ford shifts, and that you may find yourself in trouble before you dream of it. Hence the state of the fords becomes the marked topic of conversation ; and every person you meet, instead of making the usual comment on the weather, gives you the last news of the tide—or wishes you a dry ford—and a good ford—or hopes you may get a ford at all—a very serious matter, as to miss the ford, and have to stay all night on the wrong side of it, would involve an amount of “roughing it” scarcely desirable.

The fords differ much one from another. That which connects Vallay with North Uist is an unbroken beach of hard, white sand, extending the whole two miles from isle to isle, a lonely level shore on which generally no sign of life is visible, save a few white-

winged sea-birds, that float on the breeze like flecks of spray from the white surges beyond.

The next ford lies between North Uist and Benbecula, and is known as the Big Ford, being about four miles across. Half of this lies over sand, by no means sound—and the rest of the way is so intricate, that a stranger must take a fisher-laddie for his guide, along a track twisting and turning in and out between low reefs of black rocks, skirting quicksands, and dangerous holes—splashing through water ankle-deep or sometimes deeper still, through beds of sea-weed and tangle; altogether a very labyrinth. The track is marked by black beacons, but many of these have been washed away, and altogether a more dismal road to have to travel on a stormy day, with a dubious ford perhaps, and dreary grey rain, could hardly be imagined; you cannot help picturing the horrors of sudden illness, or overpowering weariness, detaining some lonely woman or child in that melancholy channel, till the waters return in their might, whirling along in the strong swift current which here pours from the Atlantic to the Minch.

Having passed this dismal ford, you find yourself in bleak Benbecula, a dreary level of dark peat-moss and sodden morass, only diversified by more of the shallow lakes which are so numerous in these isles, all abounding in trout, which the oft-times hungry people would fain capture for their own use, but which here, as elsewhere, are strictly preserved.

Strangely enough, the ford marks a distinct ecclesiastical boundary, the inhabitants of North Uist being almost all Protestants (there are only three or four Roman Catholic families on the isle), whereas the majority of the people of Benbecula, South Uist, and Barra have adhered to their hereditary faith, uninfluenced by the Reformation, a circumstance attributed to the fact that while Clan Ranald and the MacNeills (who ruled in the Southern Isles) continued faithful to the Church of Rome, the Macdonalds encouraged their people to embrace the Protestant faith.

About sixteen hundred human beings contrive to exist on Benbecula, and, with all its drawbacks, hold these five miles of dull peat-moss dearer than any "large land" that could be be-



stowed upon them in foreign parts. Like most of its neighbours, it has a belt of white sand and "machar land" on the western coast, and yields a tolerable supply of potatoes and barley.

But the casual visitor sees only one point of relief to the dreary monotony of the scene, namely, the ruins of Borge Castle,—a fine massive keep commanding the whole isle, but now most desolate,—the haunt of croaking "hoodie craus."

There is small temptation to linger here, so you hurry on to try and save the next ford, and so reach South Uist. This ford is only one mile across; it may, however, happen that you reach it only in time to see the waves pouring in, rapidly changing the ford to a sound, which no boat will cross, so there is nothing for it but to wait in Benbecula till the next day; and a very dreary wait it is, as two of my friends<sup>1</sup> proved to their cost, and thankful they were to get a night's rest in a house, which at that time was, and perhaps still is, the only apology for an inn. They noted with interest the wood-work of their room, which was all built of worm-eaten drift-wood, with here and there rusty nails still marking its descent from some good ship which had gone to pieces on the rocks. All the furniture in the room was of the same sort.

It is curious to think of these treeless islands, where every atom of wood for every household purpose must be imported from afar, where a good wreck must necessarily be looked upon as a god-send, and where day by day the tide line is eagerly scanned, to see what treasures may have drifted in from far countries.

For the wrecks are not the sole timber supply. Good logs of hardwood and felled trees, as well as chance branches and spars, are washed ashore from West Indian and Mexican forests, drifting along with the warm Gulf Stream. Bales of cotton, and bags of coffee, Molucca beans, or fairy eggs as the people call them, and all manner of quaint treasures, are among the spoil which rewards the patient seekers. Sometimes they find foreign shells; sometimes such bamboos and fragments of carved wood as encouraged Columbus to seek for an unknown world, far away to the west; and

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Otter and Miss Bird, who visited these Isles with Captain Otter, R.N., when engaged on the Admiralty Survey.

sometimes—most precious prize—some drowned lady's raiment, which will set the fashion, no matter of what country, for many a long day.

On one occasion my kinsman, Campbell of Islay, found a number of the graceful marine creatures known as "Portuguese men-of-war" stranded on a tidal rock in the sound of Barra. They were still alive, and he extemporized a tiny aquarium, in which these tropical guests survived for a little while. He described them as "blue transparent things like a leaf, about the size of a half-crown, with a membrane like a lateen sail raised out of water, and lots of coloured tentacles below."

I have sailed in many tropical seas, but have looked in vain for these elegant little creatures, which floated so peacefully along on the Gulf Stream, till they reached the rocky shores of Barra.

Live tortoises occasionally drift ashore, not much the worse for their long voyage; and once there came floating in, the mast of a man-o'-war, the *Tilbury*, which had been burnt off Jamaica.

Sometimes the wrecks yield stores, the use of which sorely puzzles the simple islanders, as when a vessel laden with tea met her doom off Dalebeg in Lewis, and the people could devise no better use for the precious cargo than to use it as manure, and to this day a field is there known as the tea-field. The large seeds of western forest trees, which are thus found, are esteemed great treasures, and are worn as charms, especially by women whose progeny is not so numerous as they might wish. One of these was recently presented to a friend of mine, with the assurance, given quite in earnest, that a similar one having been worn by another member of the family, had been the undoubted cause of the safe arrival of a son and heir! The commoner seeds are of two sorts, a large purplish-brown bean with a black band, and a round grey one, both of which I have found in great abundance on the shores of Ceylon, washed down by the great rivers which flow through the forests, collecting contributions on their seaward way.

But precious to the islanders as are these charms, no gift of the sea can compare in value with the timber, whether it comes in form of logs or of wrecks. It is not many years since the factor of

one of the largest proprietors wrote to acquaint his employer with the joyful fact that, thanks to Providence, there had been three wrecks in the early part of the winter, so that the island was well supplied with wood !

It does sound curious to the unaccustomed ear to hear the quaint phrases of piety with which these spoils of the deep are sometimes welcomed, and the ill-concealed regret of some of the old folk at the building of lighthouses, which have tended to warn vessels from these shores. They certainly have a practical belief in the proverb, "It's an ill-wind that blows no one good"—a creed which my great-grandfather<sup>1</sup> must assuredly have held when, in the middle of the last century, he wrote to an uncle in Morayshire, giving an account of his wife's estate of Penrose, near Helstone, in Cornwall.

He says : " In my last, I sent you enclosed a rent-roll of this estate, but I forgot to mention one thing, which is a very considerable appurtenance belonging to it, viz., a royalty on the sea-coast, which generally keeps my cellars well stock't with wine, brandy, and many other valuable comoditys. *These things are called God's blessings in this country !* I had one of them last year that brought me in eight hundred gallons of French brandy ; another brought me ten hogsheads of good claret and frontiniack, which your friend Bruce seems to like very well ; and this very winter I have had two of these blessings, one of which brought me a noble stock of flour, wine, and bale goods ; the other brought me only a parcel of hides, log-wood, and some other trifles that may be converted into cash. These things are very convenient in a large family in these hard times, for corn of all kinds is very dear in this country at present, and I suppose not much cheaper in Moray. I would therefore advise you to come and partake of our Cornish blessings ! "

The writer might have added that he himself was among the " blessings " thus drifted to the Cornish shores. For having sailed for India, his ship was compelled by stress of weather to run into Falmouth, where he arrived in time for a grand ball, at which the young heiress of Penrose was present. She expressed her willing-

<sup>1</sup> Alexander Cumming of Altyre married Grace Pearse of Penrose.

ness to dance with any of the officers "except that ugly Scotchman!" who, nevertheless, wooed and won her with amazing velocity; and we have good reason to believe that she was well content with her share of "Cornish blessings!"<sup>1</sup>

Old ocean pays tribute of all sorts. Sometimes, together with rich merchandise from the ships she has swallowed up, she brings the bodies of drowned sailors, and lays them gently down on the white sands; and the sea-faring folk give them such a decent burial as they themselves hope to receive, should they meet the like fate.

One of their oldest burial-grounds is in South Uist, on the grassy top of a sand-hill overlooking the sea. The centre is marked by a cross of worm-eaten drift-wood, round which are clustered the dead of many centuries. The people of the island are for the most part Roman Catholics, and for them the central ground is reserved. Protestants are buried in an outer circle; while in a third circle are laid all strangers, and all the unknown dead who are cast up by the sea. Some of these tombs are marked by memorial-stones—one or two richly carved; but for the most part only a grassy mound, with a few wild flowers, marks where the sleepers lie waiting so quietly. And when the wind whispers and rustles among

<sup>1</sup> Still more recently, the inhabitants of St. Agnes, one of the Scilly Isles, were in the habit of praying to St. Waurna that she would be pleased to send them a richly-freighted merchantman, or any good ship that pleased her; and should such a vessel happily be wrecked, they were not content with appropriating her spoils, but also murdered any unhappy sailors who reached the shores alive!

The tradition concerning St. Waurna is that she crossed over from Ireland in an open corragh, possibly with a view to instructing the Scillonians in Christian principles! More probably, however, her worship is a relic of early Celtic Paganism, which was "adapted" by the Christian teachers who found it impossible to suppress her. Saint or goddess, nothing certain is known concerning her, save her power over the elements, which her worshippers sought to enlist in the cause of wrecking. (Her name bears a singular resemblance to Waruna or Varuna, the title whereby the Supreme God is addressed in the early Hindu hymns; as Varuna, Lord of the Ocean, Creator of the World and the Planets, Ruler of the Winds.) St. Waurna had a holy well into which her votaries used to cast pins, and similar small offerings, but it has now fallen into disuse.

the bent, or rushes with swift swirl over sea and land, the islesmen listen reverently, for they have still a lingering belief that that swift rushing sound is caused by the great army of the dead passing hither and thither on their ghostly missions.

So eerie and awesome are the effects of mist, storm, and tempest, and of wild meteoric lights, flashing blood-red, as they often do on these northern skies, that it is small wonder if these people cling to their faith in the legends of olden days, and still think that sometimes the strange spirit-world which lies so near to them may mix itself with their daily life, and the wan grey ghosts of their fathers become visible to their mortal eyes.

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#### HOME—SWEET HOME !

Dreary and desolate as are the low shores of Benbecula, South Uist is more dreary and more desolate still. It is an island about twenty-five miles in length by five in width, rough and hilly on the east side, which is entirely given over to sheep (the isle supports 2612 sheep, 2292 head of cattle, and 916 horses). As on all these isles, such arable land as there is lies on the western shore, which is a dead flat, intersected by fresh-water lochs abounding in trout. Here of course live most of the 4000 inhabitants, and here

too is Lochdar, the island-home of Lady Gordon Cathcart, who owns the whole isle, and several of those adjacent, including Benbecula. Good fields of fine rye-grass immediately around the house tell of successful reclamation from the moorland, but the general condition of the country is not suggestive of much satisfaction to the small struggling farmers.

As you cross the ford, from Benbecula, you find your path overshadowed by the dark mountain mass of Hecla. Then, as far as the eye can reach, stretches the endless brown morass, with more and more shallow lakes, only a few feet deep, dark and pitch-like. Of course, in sunshine, all the rich colours of mosses and lichens and skyey reflections lend beauty enough to any bit of uncultivated land and water, but when the whole is saturated with continuous rains, and reduced to one vast bog, the aspect of such a country must be depressing indeed.

Right across the island the road is built upon a narrow stone causeway, which is carried in a straight line over moor and moss, bog and loch, and which grows worse and worse year by year. Such miserable human beings as have been compelled to settle in this dreary district, having been evicted from comparatively good crofts, are probably poorer and more wretched—their hovels more squalid, their filth more unavoidable, than any others in the isles—the huts clustering together in the middle of the sodden morass, from which are dug the damp turfs which form both walls and roof, and through these the rain oozes, falling with dull drip upon the earthen floor, where the half-naked children crawl about among the puddles, which form even around the hearth—if such a word may be used to describe a mere hollow in the centre of the floor, where the sodden peats smoulder as though they had not energy to burn. Outside of each threshold lie black quagmires, crossed by stepping-stones—drainage being apparently deemed impossible. Yet with all this abundance of misplaced muddy water, some of the townships have to complain of the difficulty of procuring a supply of pure water, that which has drained through the peat-moss being altogether unfit for drinking or cooking.

Small wonder that the children born and reared in such sur-

roundings should be puny and sickly, and their elders listless and dispirited, with no heart left to battle against such circumstances. Existence in such hovels must be almost unendurable to the strong and healthy, but what must it be in times of sickness? The medical officer of this district states officially that much fever prevails here, distinctly due to under-feeding. He says two families often live in the same house, and that he has attended eight persons in one room, all ill with fever, and seven or eight other persons were obliged to sleep in the same room!

The misery of these homes suggests a parallel with some in Ireland, which reminds me that it was to this isle of South Uist that the Emerald Isle first gave the precious boon of potatoes. They were imported by Clan Ranald in the year 1743. At first the people strongly objected to them, and nine years elapsed ere they found their way to Barra. Ten years later we hear that they were the main food of the people for at least three months in the year. Thence they soon spread all over the Highlands.

However unattractive to the poor cottars may be their dwellings in South Uist, to a sportsman the island must indeed be a paradise—by reason of the vast tribes of wild duck, snipe, teal, woodcocks, and all manner of aquatic birds which haunt the fresh-water lochs. The grey geese breed here, and the poor farmers have trouble enough to defend their little crops from these marauders, who assemble in flocks of five or six hundred, and attack the fields. The barnacle-geese winter here in almost incredible numbers. Tribes of wild swans pay an annual visit to the coast. In short, all manner of feathered fowl here find a favourite refuge.

Six miles of sea separate South Uist from Barra, which is the southernmost of the larger isles in the Outer Hebrides. It is about twelve miles in length—a wild and rugged isle, girt with dark rocks and caves, but with deep bays gleaming with the finest white shell-sand—well-nigh as white as the sea-foam which breaks upon the shore. Yet though its granite ribs crop out in all directions, it is emphatically a green isle, and its pasturage and that of the Isle of Vatersay, which lies immediately to the south, is said to be richer than that of any other isles in the group. On Vatersay 1200

sheep and 400 head of cattle find luxuriant grazing. One might fancy that whatever other hardships these islanders had to endure, they might at least be secure of good dairy produce, but the great want of milk for themselves and their children is one of their sorest grievances.

In days of old, Barra belonged to the Macdonalds of Clanranald, and McNeill of Barra. But about the year 1838, it was purchased by Colonel Gordon of Cluny, together with South Uist, Benbecula, Watersay, and the small adjacent isles, at a cost of upwards of £173,000. It may certainly be described as "a fancy property," quite unique, and affording its proprietor an abundant field for unremunerative outlay. Fortunately for the inhabitants, these isles are now the property of Lady Gordon Cathcart, who not only takes the keenest interest in their welfare, but is blessed with such abundant means as have already enabled her to carry out many wise and philanthropic measures, with a view to teaching her people how best to help themselves. Her position, as proprietrix of most flourishing fishing villages on the east coast of Scotland (whence, year after year, scores of energetic fishers sail to these Hebridean waters and reap rich harvests from the herring shoals—often ere the Islesmen have realized that the herring have come, and perhaps gone again), gives her exceptional knowledge of fisher folk, and how best to enable them to help themselves, and to this most difficult problem she has applied both heart and mind.

Here, as elsewhere in the isles, the problem is rendered doubly difficult by the necessity which compels all the people to combine the professions of fishing and farming, instead of doing either thoroughly, so the valuable cod, ling, lobster, and even herring fisheries, remain only partially developed, because the fishers must needs bestow half their time and energy on tilling rocky and exhausted land which can no longer yield them her increase.

Nature has endowed Barra with one priceless boon, in the excellent harbour of Kisimul, or Castle Bay, which affords secure anchorage in deep water, in all conditions of the tide. It is landlocked by the green Isle of Watersay, and being accessible from either the Atlantic on the one side, or the Minch on the other,



affords a secure harbour of refuge for ships of heavy tonnage, when overtaken by sudden storms.

Here in the spring the herring fleets congregate from all quarters, east and west coast, and from three to four hundred boats (averaging from fifteen to twenty-five tons burden) bring a temporary stir to its quiet waters. At this season perhaps a couple of thousand people connected with the fisheries assemble on the shores of Castle Bay and Vatersay, all in the employment of a small regiment of fish-curers, who run up temporary huts and bothies, surrounded by piles of barrels, destined to convey the captured herring shoals to the continental markets of St. Petersburg, Königsberg, Dantzic, Hamburg, and Stettin.

On a rocky islet in a corner of the bay, stand the massive ruins of Kisimul Castle, to which the harbour owes its name—the old dwelling of the McNeills of Barra—and perhaps the most picturesque thing in the Hebrides, having a strong likeness to Chillon, as it rises from the waters with its fine hilly background. Drawing near to the stately old keep, it seems to be thickly covered with the greenest ivy, which, on closer inspection, proves to be a clinging drapery of the *Asplenium marinum*.

For those who love wild flowers, these islands offer various treasures. For instance, in the rocky Isle of Eriskay, in Barra Sound, a lovely blue flower, something like a convolvulus, with waxy leaf, blooms in July and August. As it is unknown elsewhere, the people account for its presence by saying that Prince Charlie brought some seeds from Normandy, and sowed them here in some idle moment, in those summer days which he spent here, when, in July 1745, he arrived with one small frigate of sixteen guns, with a little handful of faithful adherents, to reclaim the crown of Britain.

The castle of Kisimul is about seven hundred years old. When Martin visited it two hundred years ago, he found guards and sentries still posted, on the watch for possible surprise. Over the gate, a "gockman" spent the night thus pleasantly watching for the foe who never came, repeating warlike rhymes to keep himself awake, and hurling stones at possible invaders. In the rocks

below, a dock was cut, wherein McNeill's galley might lie in perfect safety, with the additional defence of a strong sea-wall. Thence he was wont to sally forth, and carry terror through the isles, as his Danish predecessors had done before him; for old as is this wave-washed, weather-beaten fortress, it was built on the site of one very much older, called by the Danes Tur Leoid, under the walls of which lay a fleet of Danish galleys always ready for action.

McNeill kept up the warlike character of his ancestry, and in the hour of need could count on two hundred fighting men ready to fly to arms at the summons of their chief, his estates extending as far as Lochboisdale.

The ancient burial-place of the McNeills was at Kilbar, now ruinous, and overgrown with nettles and rank weeds. Two small chapels remain, dedicated to St. Barr—one of those dubious early Christians not recognized by the Romish calendar, whose memory, however, is still honoured by the people who come here annually to perform the *Deisul*, and go thrice round the ruins, following the course of the sun.

The population of Barra, numbering nearly 2000 persons, are nearly all Roman Catholics, not more than about twenty children of Protestant parents being in attendance at the four parish schools. The people are generally a cheerful race—very different from the saddened dwellers in the bogs of South Uist, though their homes are much the same, with only one hole in the thatch to admit light, and emit smoke. The fire burns in a hollow in the middle of the floor, and round it gather all the picturesque details of such an interior—the cattle on one side, the human beings on the other; the big black pot, the heaps of fishing-nets, or tarry wool, and the blue peat smoke veiling all.

Barra, like the neighbouring isles, is rich in ruined forts and duns. It has sundry little lochs swarming with trout, and on several of these, now quiet tarns, a fortified island reminds this peaceful generation of their turbulent ancestors.

There were, however, certain curious statistics published not many years ago, which tend to show that however kindly these good folk may be among themselves, some of them recently retained

curious laws of morality as regards the strangers whom ocean casts on their hospitality ; like the Ishmaelites of old, their hand is said to be against every man ; but unlike them, these Sea-Arabs have small regard for the rights of their guests, in the matter of wrecked property. The stories of grasping and dishonesty connected with the securing of such heaven-sent cargoes sound rather like legends of the days when the men of Barra were notorious pirates, than like true narratives of the nineteenth century. We hear how the survivors of such wrecks have been pitilessly plundered of what little they had contrived to save ; while heavy bills for service rendered, were sent in to the authorities.

Such was the case of the *Bermuda*, which was driven ashore some years ago in a wild wintry gale. The captain related how after long tossing in a fierce tempest his ship was cast upon the sands of Barra. All lives were saved—but the scene of lawlessness at the wreck was something indescribable. Everybody began to rifle, rob, and plunder—and such was the effect on the crew of the vessel, that, notwithstanding their recent escapes from peril, they joined in and plundered too. Meanwhile the captain's wife and little daughter were left to shiver on the beach, while the driving snow fell fast. Benumbed, bewildered, half dead with fright and cold, they were surely fit objects for mercy ; but the tender mercies of the wreckers were cruel indeed, for taking the boots and plaids of the helpless woman and child, they departed leaving them half dead. The captain, who had been a powerless spectator of the scene, had no redress, save the recounting of his woes to the nominal authorities. Yet these harpies of the shore consider themselves most zealous Christians, and will on no account put to sea without the blessing of the priest and the safeguard of holy water !

Sixteen miles to the south of Barra lies South Bernera, about a mile long by half a mile broad ; the uttermost isle, a bold mass of dark gneiss sloping down gradually towards the east, but presenting to the western waves a grand rocky rampart crowned with such a lighthouse of iron and granite, as may defy the wildest tempest, and warn all mariners to keep well away from this deadly coast.

In clear weather this light is visible at a distance of thirty-three miles, but it is said that the height of the tower itself (fifty feet), and the fact of its being perched on a cliff nearly seven hundred feet above the sea, actually diminishes its value, as its light is often shrouded in mist, when all is clear below. It is a strange life of exile, which falls to the lot of the lighthouse men, living on so remote an isle, with only one possible landing-place ; a shelving ledge of rock, on to which, if you are expert, you may jump, as your boat rises on the crest of a wave, and thence scramble up a slippery shelving rock, and then up a steep ravine, to the summit of the isle. It is only in the summer months that even this is possible. During the long winter, with its nights of sixteen dark hours, no vessel ventures within miles of the island, and a distant glimpse of a sail on the horizon is a noteworthy event.

For two hours in April, and two hours in June, a steamboat devotes its attention to the lighthouse stores ; and once a year, a priest from Barra visits his little flock ; otherwise the forty islanders are happily independent of all outer influences, and a fine, hardy, self-reliant race they seem to be. This sad year, alas ! the wail of want and suffering rises from each one of these far isles, where the pressure of dire poverty is making itself felt as sorely as on the larger isles ; only, as inhabitants are fewer, the task of relief seems less hopeless.<sup>1</sup>

On the occasion of Captain Otter's surveying expedition here, so soon as the *Shamrock* anchored off South Bernera, one man-dived like a South-sea Islander, and came on board, but the sight of the black cook was a very great shock to his nerves, as it subsequently was to those of his fellows ; being almost entirely in accordance with their satanic theories. They made much of their rare guests,

<sup>1</sup> In glancing at the census for 1881, I am struck by the number of little isles with a population of six or fewer persons. I find fifteen islets, on each of which lives one family ; and six isles with two families.

Of the larger isles, of which I have spoken, the population is as follows :—

Skye	...	...	...	16,889	Benbecula	...	...	...	1661
Lewis	...	...	...	28,339	Barra	...	...	...	1869
North Uist	...	...	...	3371	Bernera	...	...	...	452
South Uist	...	...	...	3825	Mingalay	...	...	...	150

for whose entertainment they produced bowls of rich cream. The ladies' dresses were examined with great interest by the lassies, who had only once before seen a lady. They were themselves dressed in good striped winceys of their own spinning.

They had only two petitions to make to their visitors. The first and most earnest, was that a teacher might be sent them for their children ; they would willingly do all in their power for his maintenance, if only he were sent. The other request was for any extra spars which they could use as bird poles. Bits of rope or sail would also have been precious. The abundance of ordinary drift-wood was suggested by the amount of furniture in the houses.

Of course the people are dependent on the sea-fowl, whose flesh they salt and eat, and whose feathers not only supply their bedding, but, together with dried fish, enable them to buy tea and tobacco from the outer world. Their most successful times and seasons for capturing these wild beautiful birds, are the storms, when mad hurricanes are raging, and tossing the sea-spray over the land. Then the very birds are bewildered, and instead of flying straight to their nests in the cliff, are swept beyond their mark, and the islander (who is patiently lying on his back on the very verge of the cliff, with his head to the sea, armed with a long pole) strikes the bird with swift, dexterous hand, and rarely misses his aim. It is curious, in thinking how our luxuries come from other men's toils, to trace even our warm downy feather-beds to such battling with bitter cold and tempest as falls to the lot of these fowlers !

One trace of olden days remains on South Bernera, to puzzle antiquarians. It is a wall about thirty feet high and two feet in thickness, stretching right across the precipitous end of the island just beyond the lighthouse, for what purpose no one can imagine. The stones of which it is built, are described as being ten inches long, wedge-shaped at both ends, and fitting into each other with extreme regularity and nicety.

One mile from South Bernera lies the Isle of Mingalay (likewise a mighty mass of Laurentian gneiss). Its black crags and precipices are even grander than those of its neighbours, rising a thousand feet from the sea. These also are, in summer, literally white with

the myriads of sea-fowl of every species, while the whole air seems to quiver with the soft fluttering cloud of white and grey wings. The account of their proceedings is very curious. The orderly manner in which each tribe keeps possession of its own allotted space ; and the regularity with which in the first week of February all the birds arrive, devote some hours to house-cleaning, then vanish again, only returning at intervals till May, when they lay their eggs.

Then come the cares of their vast nursery and the education of the young birds, and when that is completed, the whole legion departs, no one knows whither, but the islanders sadly watch the last quivering cloud vanish on the horizon, while a melancholy silence reigns on the great cliffs, and for seven months the mad tossing waves have it all to themselves, and are the only signs of life and motion, as the snowy surges dash through every cleft and fissure of the dark rocks. And in truth here rocks reign supreme, for all round the isle there is not even the tiniest belt of soft sea-sand, where the little bairns may play in safety and gather treasures of the tide.

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. As a matter of course, a traveller sees only the picturesque side of life in these wild regions. It may perhaps be well to glance at some phases of real life in the nineteenth century as suggested by the evidence given before the Royal Commission in June 1883.

Here are a few extracts. At Loch Eport, in North Uist, the crofters told how "repeated evictions from other districts were the cause of so many townships being overcrowded." These commenced about sixty years ago, and continued till 1850, by which time all the inhabitants of a large district had been ruthlessly evicted. The lands which they had held were fertile, and there they had lived prosperously "in ease and plenty."

They were allowed no voice whatever in their future destination. "Many were compelled to emigrate to the colonies, and in one ship conveying them, fever broke out, to which many succumbed. Others who remained in the island got corners in other places, while the

remainder were supplied with labour by the Highland Committee, until finally sent to Loch Eport, where they still struggled to exist.

"The hardships to which these latter were exposed between their eviction and their settlement in Loch Eport were beyond description. The houses were knocked down about their ears, and they got no compensation for anything on the ground. They got no assistance in building their new houses. It was towards the end of the year, in winter, that they were building their temporary houses.

"The severities of the winter, living in rude turf huts, and without fuel, *except what they had to carry twelve miles*, told on the health of many. The inferiority of the soil they now lived on, and its unsuitableness for human existence, was indescribable. Notwithstanding that, they had laboured to improve it for thirty years. The crofts would not yield them as much food on an average as would support their families for two months of the year. The ground was of such a nature that it could scarcely be improved, and the soil was so much reduced by continual cropping, that it was almost useless. The place, too, was over-crowded, there being thirty crofts, on which forty families lived, where formerly there were only three.

"The common pasture, if it could be called by that name, was extremely bad, so much so, that in winter those of the people who had cattle, had to keep constant watch, else they would stick in the bogs. Human beings could not travel over portions of their crofts in winter. The people were at present in poverty, and suffering privations and inconveniences of a nature to which the bulk of their countrymen were strangers. They earnestly prayed that the Commission would recommend their removal to some other place where they could live by the productions of their labours on the soil."

Very similar are the accounts given of the clearances of whole districts in various parts of the group. For example, a witness from Ferrinlea says—"The clearances commenced about seventy years ago. M'Caskill had only Rhudunan in his possession at that time, and Glenbrittle was occupied by crofters in comfortable circumstances, and he cleared it and made a sheep run of it. There was then a church in Gleniner, and there is nobody there now to use it. The church is in ruins, and the manse is converted into a shepherd's house. About a dozen families, all in comfortable circumstances, were removed from Tusdale. Some went abroad, and others went to various parts of the country.

"There used to be sixteen families in Crickernish, and there is nobody there now but a shepherd from other townships. The big township of Ferrinlea, which was occupied by thirty families, was cleared. A township in Minginish, with twelve families, was removed, and a place called Lecachlerish was cleared, and the people scattered throughout the world. When the present tacksman of Talisker got the tack thirty-three years ago, he deprived the cottars of the grazings which they had, and for twenty years they could not get any. He also took from us our peat-moss, and gave us a bog which neither man nor beast had used up to that time. He measured it out to us by the yard. The cottars who had been left by M'Caskill at Fiscavaig were also deprived of their peat-moss. They got for it a piece of bad land, which could not be called earth or moss. They had to cut it for fuel. Then he removed ten cottar families who had been left by M'Caskill at Tortenan, Fhirich, and ten or eleven from Fiscavaig, and put them in Ferrinlea, dividing the existing holdings to do so. We were obliged to work for the tacksman of Talisker whenever he required us. The strongest man, though he be as strong as Samson, only gets 1s. a day, and the women 6d. We have often to walk nine or ten miles to attend to his work."

The evidence of a representative fisherman and crofter of Coillemore, Sconser, in the Isle of Skye, suggests that the joy of the deer-stalker may mean grief to his poor brethren. He tells how they have some arable ground and pasture, and each crofter is allowed a cow and a cat, but no dog. They are not allowed to graze any sheep on their pasture in case they should stray on the deer forest. Nevertheless, sheep from adjoining large farms come down upon their grazings, and their crops are eaten up by the deer. "There were *four townships cleared thirteen years ago to make room for the deer*, and a large number of those evicted were brought down to our village, in which there were thirteen bigger and fourteen smaller crofts. My great-grandfather and four others once occupied the whole of Coillemore. We cannot keep the strange sheep off our grazings, because our herd is not allowed to keep a dog."

Another witness says—"In our township we are very much troubled by the deer. I had a dog to protect my crops, but a gamekeeper, named Robert M'Gregor, came down to my lot and shot it in presence of my wife and myself. I complained to the Fiscal about it.

"Did he prosecute the case?"



"The answer I got from the Fiscal was that the factor was saying that we had no right to keep a dog. Nothing was done in the case. We have been making complaints for years about the deer. When we complained to the factor, he said that if we were not satisfied we could throw our place up.

"The deer forest marches with our hill pasture, and the deer come across it and trespass upon us. Neither we nor our sheep are allowed on our own pasture at the shooting season when the huntsman comes round, and our sheep then are not allowed on the hill.

"What do you do when the deer come on your arable ground?

"We have to watch them at night.

"Did anybody ever kill a deer that came on his arable land?

"We dare not.

"What would happen to you if you did?

"I would be evicted from the place. The deer are eating our oats. We need to be protected from them. We have been promised compensation, but we never got any. We have to stand the loss ourselves, though the land is refusing to yield crop, and the seed of one year will not yield sufficient to sow the next. But we must pay rent to the uttermost penny. For the same land, less the grazings we had, the rent is now more than a hundred pounds higher than it was.

"The Sconser houses are worse than any in Skye. The gamekeepers prevent the people taking thatch from the forest. There is nowhere else to get it. They also object to the people taking heather for ropes.

A neighbour of mine went out to cut heather on our pasture for ropes, and the huntsmen came upon him, and threatened to shoot him if they found him there again. They were afraid we would disturb the muirfowl.

A crofter from Milovaig says—

"We have very miserable dwellings, and never get aid to build better houses. They are thatched with straw, and as our crofts do not produce the amount of straw necessary for fodder and thatch for our houses, and we are prohibited from cutting rashes or pulling heather, the condition of our dwelling-houses in rainy weather is most deplorable. Above our beds comes down pattering rain, rendered dirty and black by the soot in the ceiling above, and, in consequence, the inmates of the beds have to look for shelter from the rain in some dry place on the leese of the house. Out of twenty crofters' houses

there are only two in which the cattle are not under the same roof with the family."

Dr. Fraser of Edinbane in Skye is asked—

"Are you aware of any cases of disease which can be distinctly traced to the habits and food of the people?"

"I have seen a good deal of scrofulous disease, a good deal of lung disease, and a large proportion of eye disease, due to the houses, feeding, and want of clothing. I think the diet of the people much too limited, even in a good year—potatoes, fish, and meal. I do not see any permanent remedy. There are too many people on the land, and I do not see how you are to get rid of them. I am quite satisfied that the crofts are too small. As a general rule, the people all wish to be crofters.

"Do you think the want of food is the cause of the people remaining comparatively idle during the winter months? The people in this country do not display great energy in cultivating their crofts in the winter months?"

"They do not. I am sure they feel very much less inclined to work when they are not well fed. I believe so from what I feel myself.

"Were their food better, do you consider they would display more energy?"

"I am sure they would. There are no better navvies, as an average, than the Skye men; but then they are having beef three times a day."

. . . . .

I may quote some passages from the evidence of men who, when evicted from their crofts on the mainland, were compelled to seek for quarters on the wretched Isle of Soa.

"Donald M'Queen, catechist, said—I do not know exactly how old I am, but my age is more than ninety years at any rate. When I was young, I went as a teacher to the island of Soa—to the first English school there. I remember that when I was young, it was the custom for the people to have sheep, horses, and cattle upon the hill, and to live in shielings.

"The Chairman—From your recollection, do you think that the people in those days were better off and happier than they are now? A.—Is it not likely that they would be better off and more contented when they had cattle, sheep, and horses of their own in plenty, which they have not to-day?"

"Alex. Mackaskill, cottar and boatman, Isle of Soa, said—My great-grandfather served with the army. My grandfather was forced to go

to the army, and his bones are bleaching in a West India island. My father was in the militia; my brother was in Her Majesty's navy till the time of his death, and now the grandson of my grandfather is on a rocky island that is not fit to be inhabited. In Soa we pay £3 of rent. At first the agreement was that we were to have four milk goats, a cow, and ten sheep. The farmer by degrees reduced the number of our cows. He did not reduce the rent a farthing. There are twenty-three families on the island. The crofts are on bogs and rocks. When you put your foot on some parts the ground shifts so much that you would think you were standing at the foot of Mount Etna.

“John M'Rae, 35, cottar and fisherman, Soa, said—I heard the former delegate's statement regarding the condition of the people of Soa, and I agree with it. I could not put down potatoes or oats this year, because the ground was so soft. It is nothing but pits or rocks. I have been getting bits of land from my neighbours to plant my potatoes, and my father was that way before me. I have no place on which to build a house. My present house is built on the sea-shore, and the tide rises to it every stormy night that comes. I have to watch and put out all my furniture, such as it is. A sister of mine was employed last winter putting out the furniture, and she was sickly, and died in consequence. *I tried, by carrying some peat soil on my back, to make a bit of land, but it defied me.* The ground is so soft about me that *I had to pave a way with stones for my cow to get to the hill.* I never saw a place in Scotland, Ireland, or France so bad for man to live in.

“By the Chairman—I have been a yachtsman.

“I quite agree that the only remedy for us is to be removed from the island altogether. I have to pay 5s. a boll for meal, bring it to Loch Slapin, and, after that, I have to bring it eighteen miles further, to Soa, in a boat. It may happen that I have to spend 15s. to £1 in lodgings when the weather is stormy, and I cannot get to the island, and those at home starving. My brother also had a house near my place, and the tide destroyed it.

“By Sheriff Nicolson—We are all fishermen in Soa. There are at present upwards of 100 people in Soa.

“By the Chairman—I just manage to keep soul and body together. I was forty years roaming at sea, and my reason for staying on the island was just to keep my aged parents out of the poor-house.

“Sixty years ago, before the evictions took place, there was only a

herd on Soa. *It was in consequence of the clearing out of the people on the mainland that they were glad to go there for a home.*

“ Sheriff Nicolson—Is there not a good deal of arable land in Ullinish and Ebst, where fine crops were grown forty years ago, and where heather and ferns are growing now? *A.—There is plenty of that.*

“ Donald M’Innes, crofter, Duisdale, aged 75, said—I remember very well the removal of the people from Borreraig twenty-six years ago, and the hardships they had to endure when put out of their houses. It was in time of snow when they were evicted. One man perished. I was in a comfortable position before people were put in among us by the clearing of other townships.

“ The man who perished belonged to Snishnish. He was found dead at his own door, after he had been evicted. His name was Alexr. Matheson. There was great hardship connected with that eviction. The fires were extinguished, the houses knocked down, and the people forced out much against their will. The officers compelled them.”

With regard to the evidence given at South Uist, one of the Royal Commissioners remarked—“ There is a serious charge in the paper which requires a little explanation. It is said in reference to the emigration of the people that ‘they were compelled to emigrate to America; some of them had been tied before our eyes; others hid themselves in caves and crevices for fear of being caught by authorized officers.’ Did you see any of these operations?

“ *A.—Yes; he heard of them, and saw them. He saw a policeman chasing a lad named Donald Smith down the road towards Askernish with the view of catching him, in order to send him aboard the emigrant ship lying at Lochboisdale, and he saw a man who lay down on his face and knees on a little island to hide himself from the policeman, who had dogs searching for him in order to get him aboard the emigrant ship. The man’s name was Lauchlan M’Donald. The dogs did not find this unfortunate youth, but he was discovered all the same in a trench, and was taken off.*

“ *Q.—Do you really say that those people were caught and sent to America, just like an animal going to market?*

“ *A.—Just the same way. There was another case of a man named Angus Johnston. He had a dead child in the house, and his wife gave birth to three children, all of whom died. Notwithstanding this, he was seized, and tied on the pier at Lochboisdale, and kicked on board. The old priest interfered, and said, ‘What are you doing to this man? let him alone; it is against the law.’ There were many hardships and*

cruelties endured in consequence of these evictions. He himself had charge of a squad of men on the road when Lachlan Chisholm and Malcolm M'Lean asked him to go to Loch Eynort to bring people out of their homes to emigrate. He refused, and constables were sent for them.

"The young man Smith he mentioned did not belong to any family going away. He was twenty years of age, and his father and mother were dead at the time.

"The wife of the man who was tied and put aboard afterwards went to the vessel. The four dead children would be buried by that time. *These things happened in the year 1850 or 1851.* The people were hiding themselves in caves and dens for fear of being sent away from the island.

"He remembered seeing the people forced into the emigrant ships at Lochboisdale by policemen and others. He saw a man named William Macpherson forced by four men to the water-side and put into the ship. Every one of the family was sent away, including the blind father. There was another case of a man named Donald M'Lellan, who, with his wife and family, was taken from his house and put into a cart until they could be sent off. There were many such cases at the time. It was about forty years ago. Seventeen hundred persons were, he believed, sent off, all of them belonging to the Gordon estate. So many people were wanting the land which these persons occupied that they were soon filled up."

One of the witnesses at Tarbert in Harris gave a number of reminiscences of the estate in the olden time, and mentioned that when one of the Macleods came home with his young wife the people were delighted to see him; twenty young women went out and danced a reel before him. "Before the year was out, these twenty women were weeping and wailing for their houses, which were unroofed, and their fires quenched. One hundred and fifty families were so treated at that time by order of the estate, and were scattered abroad."

Another instance I cannot refrain from quoting comes to us from near Dunvegan in Skye.

"John Macfie, 74, crofter, Harlosh, said—I have been forty-six years in my present croft. The people began to fall into arrears when the kelp industry ceased. In 1840 there were seventeen families removed from Feorlick by Mr. Gibbon, the tacksman, who took the land and the people on. They were placed, some by the sea and some on peat land which had never been cultivated. Some of them did not get a place on earth on which to put a foot. I myself saw them living

under a sail, spread on three poles, below high-water mark. One of the crofters—Donald Campbell—was warned by the ground officer for giving refuge to a poor man who had no house. The ground officer came and pulled down the house, and took a pail of water and threw it on the fire. By the noise made by the extinguishing of the fire, and the denseness of the steam, the wife went out of her senses. *We were then told that if we took her out to sea, and pulled her after a boat, she would get better. We took her out to sea, but she would not sink deeper than her breast.* I NEVER SAW ONE WHO WAS SO MAD. When Campbell was put out of his house, not a tenant was allowed to give him shelter. He had nine of a family, and they had to remain on the hillside on a wet night. The tacksman took our hill pasture which we had for fifty or sixty years, and settled crofters upon it. We are still paying for that hill pasture. We have no road, and should any of our people die in the winter, they have to be buried in the sea or in the peat-moss."

Any one interested in this subject will find minute details in a pamphlet on 'The Highland Clearances,' by Alex. Mackenzie, Inverness, in which are recorded well-nigh incredible statistics of events in the Isles and Highlands within the last hundred years. It tells of the wholesale clearances of wide districts in Sutherland and in parts of Ross and Inverness; of how 5390 people were forcibly driven out from the glens of Knoydart and Strathglass. It gives details of the inconceivable cruelties incident on the Glengarry evictions in 1853, when the whole population were suddenly swept from the land, which was then converted into great sheep-runs.

It tells how in 1849 about seven hundred people were evicted from Solas, in North Uist; and how in 1852 the districts of Boreraig and Suisinish, in the Isle of Skye, were likewise cleared, no mercy being shown to age or sex. Every home was barbarously destroyed; the poor possessions of the innocent inmates were thrown out and broken, the half-woven webs cut from the loom; helpless women on the eve of their confinement, wailing children, tottering grand-parents, all were alike thrust out from their loved homes, without food, fire, or shelter, or the means of procuring any. Many died of consumption, induced by sleeping shelterless for many nights on the cold ground (damp peat-moss).

A considerable number were evicted at Christmas, their fires extinguished, their houses pulled down, and they themselves forced out

into the drifting snow, to find what shelter they could among the rocks. Happy those who could find a corner in some dilapidated barn, or even rig up a blanket-tent in some ruined church. Even from such shelters as these they were again and again ejected, without any substitute being provided or any provision whatever for their support.

When some particulars of this reckless cruelty became known, and called forth an expression of public opinion, the factor actually published a circular, declaring that these evictions were “prompted by motives of piety and benevolence, *because the people were too far from Church!!*”

In 1849 and 1851 upwards of two thousand persons were forcibly shipped from South Uist and Barra, and conveyed to Quebec. Some were induced to embark voluntarily under promise that they were to be conveyed free of all expense to Upper Canada, where, on arrival, the Government agents would give them work and grant them land. These conditions were not fulfilled. They were turned adrift at Quebec, and thence compelled to beg their way to Upper Canada, and the Canadian papers teemed with accounts of the miseries endured by these unfortunate Highland emigrants, whose misery was aggravated by understanding only Gaelic, so that they were practically strangers in a foreign land. These, and thousands of emigrants from Lewis, arrived as paupers, dependent for daily bread on the charity of the Canadian settlers.

After these sad stories of how the bitter pill of compulsory emigration was sweetened thirty years ago, I must add a few words to show how differently such matters are now conducted in South Uist.

I am told that each poor family which has resolved to emigrate from the estates of the large-hearted proprietrix, have not only received all manner of compensations, but have also been presented with £100 to start them fair in their new colony. A correspondent of ‘The Scotsman’ (May 1883) thus announces the arrival in the Great North West of the first detachment.

“The first batch of emigrants sent out from Scotland under the auspices of Lady Gordon Cathcart, numbering forty-five souls, and of whom eighteen, being adults, are entitled to free homesteads, arrived in Manitoba last week, and proceeded to Brandon, where the majority of them remain under the protection of the Government immigration agent at that point, whilst two of the party are out prospecting with a land guide for a suitable section of country in which to locate their

colony. The country in the vicinity of Moosomin has been offered to them, and being well wooded, and possessing abundance of water, is probably about as good a selection as they can make.

“The system Lady Cathcart has adopted to assist these small tenant-farmers of hers is not in the ordinary way of paying their passage out, and then leaving them to the care of strangers; but she places a sum of money to their credit in a Winnipeg bank, under the control of an accredited Government agent, to be distributed amongst them in the purchase of agricultural implements.”



## CHAPTER X.

## ST. KILDA.

The Sea-fowl's Kingdom—Precious Fulmar—Population—Means of Living—Accounts by Martin, Kenneth Macaulay, and Dr. Macculloch—Infant Mortality—Mysterious Colds—"No English"—A Life of Exile—High Morality—Primitive Customs—Traces of Heathen Worship—Ravages of Small-pox—Lack of Boats.

SIXTY miles beyond Harris, forty-five from North Uist, and a hundred and forty from the mainland, lies St. Kilda, formerly called Hirt or Hirtha (so late as A.D. 1704, Buchanan was sent as a missionary to the inhabitants of Hirta), a mighty rock mass, rising precipitously from the wild waves—a lonely isle indeed. In point of fact it is one of a small group, of which, however, only St. Kilda possesses human inhabitants. The two neighbouring islets of Soay and Boreray provide rich pasture for sheep, but the predominance of rugged rock makes shepherding here a difficult matter. A hundred years ago five hundred sheep were pastured on Soay—now the island supports two hundred. Besides these, there are five bare rocks jutting up from the sea, where, all through the long months of spring and summer (*i. e.* from the beginning of March till the beginning of November), myriads of wild sea-birds congregate; so that the dark rocks of Lij, Stack-in-Armin, and Stack-Birael seem transformed to snowy mountains by reason of the multitude of solan geese and other birds of white plumage.

Around St. Kilda itself, during these months, a never-ceasing snow-shower seems to fall—a shower whose quivering snow-flakes are each beautiful living creatures; birds of dazzling whiteness, that float in tremulous clouds around their chosen home—the isle of which Scott said that

“Here the lone sea-bird makes its wildest cry.”

The little island is about three miles long and two broad; and, except at two points (where there is a landing-place, whence you can scramble up the rocks by a steep path), its sea-face is a series of precipitous cliffs, of dark syenitic trap and greenstone, rising perpendicularly to a very great height, in some places nearly 1400 feet. They are said to be the highest crags in Britain. These in the distance seem positively white by reason of the myriads of gulls, gannets, guillemots, and every species of sea-bird, whose nests are closely packed on every ledge of rock.

Equally numerous is the bird population on the crags of Boreray, which are almost as precipitous as those of St. Kilda itself.

The solan goose, the great northern diver, the fulmar or stormy petrel, which the sailors declare is named after St. Peter, in memory of his walking on the sea, great solemn black cormorants standing sentinel, thousands of puffins; in short, every sea-bird you ever heard of, are here, living busy domestic lives; talking hard about the prospects of the year, and of the millions of blue and green eggs which they have laid among grass or rushes, on bare rock, or among the large stones. Each tribe has its own encampment, though wayward individuals will sometimes sit apart in some solitary niche.

The puffins, especially, live in colonies; burrowing in the earth with their strong beak, or “neb,” as the country folk say. Hence their name of coulter-neb, from the coulter of a plough. The idler puffins profit by the labour of others, and make their nests in old rabbit-holes.

Then there are the foolish guillemots, which earn their name by sitting still on the rocks, and allowing themselves to be caught by the hand. They are said to carry their young on their backs, from

their high nests on the rocks, down to the water, when it is time to give them swimming lessons. Each bird lays one large egg, which is considered excellent food. That of the solan goose is also a delicacy, being translucent and oval, much resembling that of the plover. She also only lays one egg, and sits with her foot on it—the male bird very properly taking his turn. The great auk altogether declines to sit on her eggs, but nestles close beside them, and the warmth of her body, or of her maternal love, hatches them in due time.

There are eider ducks too, whose precious down the islanders carefully collect, going the round of the nests several times in a season, and thence stealing all the soft fine lining which the mother duck has plucked from her own breast, and with which, moreover, she covers her four eggs, that her tender nestlings may find a warmer welcome when they come out of their shell. So patient and long-suffering is this good mother, that when ruthless hands have despoiled her nest and taken one or two of her eggs, she will lay more eggs and pull more down, repeating the process till she has no down left, and has to appeal to the drake, who then gives all he can spare. It is said that one duck will thus yield about half a pound in a season, an immense quantity considering its amazing lightness. Besides these eggs, vast numbers are taken of other sorts, and of the young birds, which the people use as food. It is reckoned that upwards of 20,000 gannets are annually destroyed in the Hebrides, yet their number shows no perceptible decrease.

The life of a rock fowler is perilous indeed ; sometimes he must make his difficult way along scarcely perceptible ledges, where one false step would involve certain death. But the most inaccessible cliffs are always the most thickly crowded with nests, so these are the goals to be won ; the lower cliffs, to which his companions can let him down by strong ropes, are comparatively safe quarters, though dangerous enough. As to the ropes, they are precious property ; a good rope is a maiden's dowry, and is the most precious legacy which friend can bequeath to friend. The rope must be about thirty fathoms long, and the best are those made of strong raw cowhide, in threefold twist ; this is wrapped round with sheep-

skin to prevent the sharp rocks from cutting it. Such a rope is a treasure indeed, and with fair usage it ought to last at least two generations. The man who possesses such a one may reap his never-failing harvest on the most awful crags. Descending by his rope, he drops his snares over the unwary birds, and so captures them, while his poorer neighbour must be content with smaller gains, on less dizzy ledges. The people consider that the sea-birds yield most oil in the beginning of summer. They catch the young ones with their hands, before they can fly, and the older ones with a rod and snare.

There is one very simple method of catching old birds, known as the gull fishery. An old woman will set long strings with nooses, and then sits watching them, ready to draw them in at the right moment. She carries a small pouch, ready to catch the oil which the bird throws up in the anguish of being captured. The oil of the fulmar is coarse and yellow, having a strong rancid smell ; the people say it cures rheumatism, and they burn it in their lamps in the long winter nights. The bird is so full of oil that some slovenly householders do not even extract it, but passing a wick through the body of the dead bird, and drawing it out by the beak, actually light the wick thus oiled, and it goes on burning for a considerable time. Thus they have a ready-made bird-lamp.

They say the fulmar gives them oil for burning, down for their beds, wholesome meat, and healing ointment. Therefore they abstain from ever taking its egg—it lays only one, and deserts its nest if touched by human hand.

The people also make a sort of pudding or sauce of the very thick layer of fat which covers the solan goose, and give it to their cattle as a sort of soothing posset if they seem to have caught cold. The Rev. Kenneth Macaulay, who was appointed missionary to St. Kilda in A.D. 1764, speaks of this oily preparation as the island substitute for milk in the last century, at which time, he says that the despotic steward of the isle claimed all the milk of the people's cows (pretty little red cows), as also every second he-lamb, every seventh she-lamb, and every seventh fleece ; and also the sole right to purchase the increase of the flocks. The people had at that time

about a thousand sheep pasturing on St. Kilda, and four hundred on Boreray.

He describes the care with which the small tract of arable land was cultivated, and how its produce not only sufficed for the wants of the people, but enabled them annually to export to Harris fifty bolls of very good barley. Potatoes had very recently been introduced, as a novelty.

Now, the island produces only a small portion of the meal necessary for a smaller population, and the pastures support fewer sheep.

The population of St. Kilda, in 1881, numbered nineteen families, *i.e.* seventy-seven persons: thirty-three male, forty-four female. They live in a small green valley which runs down to the shore, where there are about thirty acres of land under cultivation—the only arable ground on the island. The people grow potatoes and oats, but get poor return—even in a good year they can barely treble the seed sown, and they say that the average return steadily decreases.

About fifty black cattle and four hundred sheep find a living among the rocky hills, but, sad to say, the pastures are also deteriorating, as there is no peat moss on the isle, so the people are compelled to dig up turf, to supply themselves with necessary fuel, and this work of destruction goes on faster than nature's powers of fresh growth. Some pasture, however, is obtained on some little islets near, and so the people obtain sufficient wool, not only to clothe themselves in good homespun, but they also with their rude hand-looms manufacture strong coarse cloth for export. They dye their own wool, make their own boots of home-cured hides, knit stockings, and prepare much salt-fish for the market, in addition to their stores of feathers and sea-bird oil.

Curiously enough, *there are no hens on the island.* Sea-fowl feed themselves, and provide a never-failing supply of eggs.

The ordinary food still consists chiefly of the flesh of sea-birds. Only think how wearisome an unvarying diet of salt-fish alternating with salt sea-bird, must be for months together—all through the long dreary winter! how, even from the commissariat point of view, the people must bemoan the departure of the myriads of

blithe, white-winged birds, which betokens not only the approach of short dark days, but a long fast from fresh meat! Think how they must hail the return of the birds in spring, with their inexhaustible supply of fresh eggs! They do occasionally indulge in a dish of braxy mutton, but cannot afford to kill healthy sheep, so that roast puffin or salt fulmar stewed in oatmeal, are still the standard dishes of St. Kilda.

Mr. Macaulay says that in his day the isle Lij was set apart as a bird sanctuary, from which no eggs were ever taken. But from all the other rocks vast stores of eggs were collected and carefully stored, without any sort of preserving process, and these the people ate with perfect composure when in the most advanced stage of rottenness!!

A hundred years earlier Mr. Martin had observed that the people of St. Kilda divided the fishing and fowling rocks as exactly as they did their corn and grass land, and no poaching would have been tolerated. Every three years the rocks were divided anew by lot; a very important measure, especially as regards the fishing rocks, inasmuch as there are only two on the isle from which it is possible to angle, and those are difficult of access. The produce of these was something enormous. He says that in one day he saw the people bring home 2000 sea-fowl and twenty-nine large baskets-full of eggs; some containing 400 large eggs, others about 800 of lesser sorts.

The only miracle is how the vast amount of bird-life is kept up without diminution, 'but year by year fresh' myriads are there; countless millions floating about in feathery crowds and darkening the air with most substantial cloud-shadows, or else packed together in serried rows along every niche and ledge of the cliffs, each bird knowing its own nest and egg by some marvellous instinct, and rearing its curious brood of soft, downy nestlings in that strangely public family life. And so the race of beautiful, snowy, white-winged spirits, with the wild eyes and the eerie cry, still holds its ground, rejoicing in the calm sunshine, or battling with wind and wave, and showing no decrease in its numbers in spite of all its human foes.

Dr. Macculloch's account of the island reads like that of a feather-bed gone mad. He says: "The air is full of feathered animals, the sea is covered with them, the houses are ornamented by them, and the inhabitants look as if they had been all tarred and feathered, for their hair is full of feathers and their clothes are covered with feathers. The women look like feathered Mercuries, for their shoes are made of gannet's skin. Everything smells of feathers." When the feathers are ready for exportation they are stowed away in low stone cells and covered with turf, to await the coming of the next boat, laden with such simple goods as may suit the needs of these Children of the Waves and of the Mist.

For in their own primitive fashion they are self-supporting, and care little for the changes and chances of the outer world, with which they have no regular connection.

Twice a year, in June and September, a boat, sent by Macleod of Macleod, goes over from Harris laden with useful merchandise, to exchange for the surplus produce of the isle; with which produce the rent is also paid in kind—oil, feathers, cloth, and cattle. The feathers are taken at a valuation of 7s. per stone for black puffin feathers, 5s. per stone for grey feathers, fulmar oil at 1s. a pint, cloth at 3s. the Scotch ell, and cattle according to individual value.

Few and simple are the desires of the people. Yet they do mourn some of their deficiencies—chiefly having no doctor, and being often left without the simplest medicines—no regular post, and, above all, no harbour where any boat can find refuge in a storm. The isle is so difficult of access, that it is not a pleasant landing even in fine weather, being on the sloping side of a solid rock which descends right down into the sea, and is all slippery with the green weed known in Scotland as slawk, and which is said to be identical with the laver, dear to English epicures. It has also a small sandy beach, but this is only accessible at low tide, and then not without danger, and aid from the inhabitants.

Most yachts rather avoid approaching these dangerous and inhospitable rocks, and steamers call by chance on an average about four times in the course of the summer, bringing welcome newspapers and *possibly* letters; so that mails may perhaps come

about six times in a year. Sometimes, however, *eight or nine months elapse without any communication with the outer world.*

As I pen these lines, news comes from Dunvegan, in Skye, that five men from St. Kilda had just arrived there in a small open fishing-boat, to say that the store of meal is finished, and that (like all the inhabitants of the other isles) they have neither seed-oats nor potatoes for the spring sowing. Dire necessity could alone inspire men with the courage to start on a voyage of upwards of a hundred miles, across the stormy seas, in April gales, and in a poor little open boat!

Just imagine the force with which the 'great waves must dash against these desolate cliffs, in the wild wintry storms, chafing and frothing over all the low breastwork of sunken rocks, till, far as the eye can reach, nothing is visible but range beyond range of raging breakers, the whole ocean boiling and seething like yeast, while blinding spray drifts right over the little island, and even the wild sea-birds dare not face the storm, but take refuge in the caves and hollows of the rock, where they sit half stupefied, and in danger of starvation. Terrible thunder-storms add awe to these wild winter months, and darken the brief hours of day.

Those long summer months, which know no real darkness, are succeeded by wintry nights of sixteen hours' duration, and long-continued periods of storm, during which the cattle and the sheep must seek for themselves such corners of shelter as exist, and the people must busy themselves with their weaving and knitting, and in cleaning and preparing their feathers for market. As to the knitting, that is a never-failing occupation for every moment when there is no other work on hand.

Thus, year after year, the simple round of life moves on. To the casual visitor, a life full of strange, picturesque incident, but one suggestive of dull monotony to any but a born islander, one who can calmly contemplate the prospect of watching the sun rise from the ocean, and sink into it again day after day, always from the same spot, throughout his fourscore years. Yet such men do exist, and nowhere is the love of country and of home more deeply rooted than among the lonely islanders of St. Kilda.



The isle is an ancient possession of the house of Dunvegan. Mr. Macaulay spoke of Norman Macleod of Macleod as proprietor in his time, having inherited from his ancestors, who had then been in possession for at least two hundred years. How it came to pass from the direct line I know not, but I am told that it was not repurchased till the reign of the present chief—a unique but very unremunerative property.

At the time when the present Macleod of Macleod took it in hand, he found all its inhabitants living huddled together in a most wretched village—a cluster of flat-roofed huts, half-buried by the accumulation of filth, both inside and out, consisting chiefly of the very unfragrant refuse of ancient sea-fowl carcasses! The village resembled a Hottentot kraal, though lacking its regularity. These miserable huts were mere mounds, with walls five or six feet in thickness, built of loose stones and turf, thatched with oat straw, and filled with a perpetual cloud of dense smoke. They had neither chimney nor window, nor furniture of any sort, but were divided by a partition of loose stones, the cattle and poultry occupying the outer half, which acted as the general manure pit, where all manner of filth was allowed to accumulate, forming a precious store, which once a year was removed, and spread over the tiny, hand-ploughed fields. The houses rarely exceeded four feet in apparent height, being sunk in the earth, so as to be less exposed to the wild raging winds which sweep the island.

Determined to improve the condition of his islanders, Macleod provided each family with a substantial two-roomed stone house, roofed with galvanized iron, as being more durable than thatch, and more able to resist the wild winds. These houses form a most respectable street, but within-doors, the people naturally adhere to their long-cherished notions of the comfort of dirt and untidiness. Milk-dishes, ropes, tarry nets, wool, cooking-pots, and fishing-tackle are strewn haphazard over the broken earthen floors; from the smoke-blackened rafters hang a winter store of dried sea-fowl, fish, and bladders containing oil for use in the long winter nights. The spinning-wheel and all the requisites for carding and dressing wool tell of the industrious and skilful hands that not only provide

clothing for their own families, but also have a surplus for sale, or to help to meet the rent.

One might naturally suppose that the grand sea-breezes, which come sweeping right across the broad Atlantic, should insure to all dwellers on St. Kilda a most unusual claim to robust health. But strange to say, from time immemorial its people have been subject to a most singular mortality among the new-born children, the majority of whom die within ten days of their birth.

Till the present generation, it was said that not one in ten survived the ninth day of their unhappy little lives, but it was supposed that this was due to the foul air the poor babies inhaled in their filthy homes, and it was naturally supposed that when the people moved into the tidy street of eighteen good, two-roomed stone houses, built for them by Macleod, these ocean-cradled babies would flourish. But strange to say, though this infant mortality may in some measure have diminished, it is still a marked feature of St. Kilda. It was hoped that the importation from the mainland of a good trained monthly nurse would exorcise this mysterious and malignant baby-foe, but even this has proved of little effect, and a considerable number of babies continue to perish. About the sixth night after birth, the children cease sucking, being apparently struck with a sort of lock-jaw. Then they are seized with convulsions, and die about the eighth day. This extraordinary peculiarity has been minutely described by successive visitors to the isle, and still no medical man has been found willing to face an exile in St. Kilda in the hopes of solving the mystery. As there are only one or two births in the year, and some babies do live, he might have to wait a considerable period.

Another very odd fact, which was solemnly vouched for by the Rev. Kenneth Macaulay in 1764 (but which I confess that I for one did not believe, till it was gravely repeated to the Royal Commissioners in 1883 by the Rev. John Mackay), is, that so certainly as strangers visit the isle, a form of influenza breaks out among the islanders. The Rev. Kenneth says that it has nothing whatever to do with infection, for there may not be any sort of illness on board the vessel which brings the stranger (perhaps a most welcome

friend); but nevertheless, first one, then another, will begin to sneeze and snuffle, and in the course of a few days every creature on the isle will be affected with severe cold, and this, without apparent rhyme or reason, in the finest summer weather! There is no possible way of accounting for this.

Ordinarily the people are not subject to colds; and they are singularly exempt from that terrible heritage of most communities in which constant intermarriage is the rule, instead of the exception—namely, consumption. This immunity is attributed to the very large amount of oil which they swallow with their sea-bird diet, especially the fulmar oil. They are also singularly free from any form of skin disease, a point which is worthy of note, inasmuch as a diet of sea-fowl is generally supposed to produce this evil.

Wild and tempestuous as are the wintry storms which sweep over these lonely rocks, the severity of actual cold is certainly tempered by the influence of the warm Gulf Stream—a kindly current which befriends these islanders in many ways, chiefly, as we have seen, by bringing gifts of timber, the most priceless of boons to people who have never in their lives seen a bush growing. Here, indeed, the precipitous coast offers no tempting shore where old ocean may cast its treasures of flotsam and jetsam; nevertheless many floating trophies are brought home by the fishers, and find welcome in the village—a village which is now as tidy as can reasonably be expected of a fisher town.

It has a neat Free Church, and a long-resident pastor, the Rev. John Mackay, who has stuck to his lonely post for eighteen years, for a considerable part of which time he was the only inhabitant of the isle who could speak English. At last one woman arrived who “had the English”; she came from Sutherland, where she had been wooed and won by a St. Kilda man, who had gone to the mainland to seek his fortune. Only think what a strange home for the bride who was not born on the isle! How she must sometimes long to escape from the ceaseless sound of the waves and the screams of the sea-birds!

Yet in the interior of the isle there are pleasant bits of green pasture land, where the fragrant clover scents the air, and lilac,

orchis, and many another sweet wild-flower, make earth beautiful. And there are many land-birds too, to bring unspoken messages from home—larks and starlings, wrens and sparrows, plovers, pigeons, curlews, and herons.

As for the minister, his is indeed a life of exile, with hardly ever a chance of exchanging even a few words (certainly never more) with men from the outer world. What a red-letter month it must be for him when Miss Macleod of Macleod comes here from Dunvegan Castle to look after her brother's far-away tenants, and rejoice their hearts with her sympathetic deeds, and words spoken in their own tongue. But never has the sound of these been so precious as when uttered by the same kind lips to sick and sad-hearted men and women from the Isles, many of whom go to the mainland in search of work, and there find themselves left stranded, with none near who can understand their feebly-whispered words in the hour of sickness or of death. To minister to such as these, this true daughter of the Isles was content for a lengthened period to make her home in the dull and smoky atmosphere of Greenock, until family ties recalled her to Dunvegan.

As regards statistics of morality, few districts stand so high as St. Kilda, and these poor islanders may well shame some of our highly-educated country villages and towns.

Strange as it may sound to such as know anything of the state of many of these, it is a fact that here illegitimacy is a thing almost unknown. There have only been two cases on the isle in the last eighteen years!<sup>1</sup>

So great an event as a St. Kilda wedding does not occur very frequently. Sometimes a whole year passes without one, and two within a twelvemonth is the highest number on record. As the people very rarely leave the island in search of work, it is almost unheard of, that one of them should marry an outsider. On

<sup>1</sup> The statistics of births in the principal towns of Scotland give an average of one tenth as illegitimate. In certain country parishes the proportion is very much higher. In the counties of Banff and Kirkcudbright fifteen per cent., in Elgin sixteen and in Wigtown seventeen per cent. of the children are illegitimate!

the isle they are born, and on the isle they are wedded and buried.

As a matter of course, this perpetual intermarriage of near kinsfolk—generation after generation of first cousins, marrying in extreme youth—must tend to the deterioration of the race, and fully accounts for the feeble constitutions and tendency to divers forms of disease which are, alas, so prevalent in our isles and highlands.

Not that this inherent delicacy is apparent to the casual observer. Except that they are evidently afflicted with rheumatism, the people of St. Kilda are a comely, healthy-looking community, representatives of six good Scotch names—McQueens and McCrinnons, McDonalds and McKinnons, Fergusons and Gillies.

The men are of middle stature, closely knit, sturdy-looking fellows, and the women rather small, and some are good-looking—a bright, intelligent community, all clad in homespun of their own production; many of the women wearing gay cotton handkerchiefs fastened with a home-made bone pin, the gift of sweetheart or brother.

So careful are they in the upbringing of their little ones, that I have been told by one well acquainted with these kindly islanders, that there is scarcely a child of six years old among them who cannot read at least some part of the Bible in the native Gaelic. The same friend<sup>1</sup> gave me a most touching description of the kindness shown him by the people, when a terrible storm threatened his ship with destruction, and it seemed as if nothing could save her from drifting right on to the cruel rocks, where no assistance could be rendered, and all hands must perish. In the bitter storm the islanders, one and all, left their firesides and repaired to the lowly little church, where they remained for hours in a ceaseless agony of prayer, till at last, just when all hope seemed past, the wind changed as if by a miracle, and the ship was saved. Thus their prayer was turned to thanksgiving; and before many hours were passed, the storm abated, and they were able once more to welcome the crew and her captain to their little rocky isle.

The isolation of St. Kilda and the simplicity of its people are

<sup>1</sup> The late Admiral Otter.

points of much interest to the other islanders, who, by comparison, feel themselves to be quite the Great World. So they love to tell how, after the death of King William, the good old minister continued to pray for him for three years, at the end of which he accidentally heard of the occurrence !

The inhabitants of Portree also take great delight in telling how some old men once came there from St. Kilda, and were so much alarmed by the size and height of the houses that they could hardly venture to walk along the street ; and of all eccentricities of civilization, that which amused them most was an umbrella, which they borrowed and hoisted in the sunshine. They were especially amazed at the sight of a few small trees, their only notion of vegetation being stunted grass, oats, and barley ; but when they beheld a coach and pair, their amazement at the house on wheels knew no bounds, more especially when they observed that the horseshoes were fastened to the horses' hoofs with iron nails—a most startling novelty.

What would they say, could they now return to Portree, to see the marvellous telegraphic needle, bringing ceaseless messages from all parts of the earth, more especially in the tourist season, when Skye now attracts such multitudes of busy men for a brief holiday ! Surely they would accuse the clerks of dabbling in the black art ! Still more would they marvel if, passing on to the opposite shore, they could see the swift iron horses, with fiery breath, rushing to and fro with interminable strings of wheeled houses crowded with Sassenachs !

The pottery of St. Kilda is curious, being the simplest clay, rudely shaped by hand and baked in the sun, having previously been glazed with milk. Jars, bowls, and all manner of culinary dishes are thus made, and answer all purposes, a metal cooking-pot being still a rare treasure. Even in some parts of the Isle of Lewis it is said that metal pots were almost unknown a dozen years ago, and I have seen various specimens of craggans—i. e. the home-made crockery of Barvas—such as no South Sea Islander would condescend to acknowledge.

When Martin visited St. Kilda in A.D. 1692, he found that the

ancient measures of omer and cubits still continued to be used in this isle. Macleod's steward was entitled to receive one omer of barley from every family. He was much struck by the simplicity of a young woman's marriage dower, which often consisted only of one pound of horsehair, wherewith to make snares for her husband's fowling. There was at that time only one boat belonging to the isle, and it so happened that on one occasion this boat, containing six or eight men, was wrecked on a neighbouring islet. These men contrived to swim ashore, and collecting heaps of dry sea-weed, they made one fire to represent each man. So the wives, understanding the sign, were comforted, and set to work diligently to carry on the men's work till such time (after some months had elapsed) as the steward should visit the isle, and 'could sail across and rescue the men, who had kept themselves alive with fish and dulse.

The Rev. Kenneth Macaulay, writing in 1764, found the community still possessed of only one boat, which in winter was drawn ashore and filled with earth and stones, to prevent its being blown away. He tells how, in October 1759, ten men were landed on the pasture isle of Boreray, which lies two leagues to the north of St. Kilda. The boat in returning to the main isle was wrecked, and the ten men had to spend the winter on the islet, where they remained till the factor's boat visited St. Kilda in the following June. Fortunately they had the run of the sheep, and abundant sea-fowl, and their clothes being worn out, they made for themselves garments of sheep-skin and skins of feathered fowl.

They found winter quarters all ready for them, in that curious relic of prehistoric days known as "the Staller House," which is a sort of bee-hive building of overlapping stones, near to which stands, or stood, "a circle of huge stones fixed perpendicularly in the ground, with one in the centre."

Macaulay noted on St. Kilda one very remarkable trace of old pagan days. On the face of a hill overlooking the road across the isle, he saw a very large square white stone, on which the people used to pour libations of milk every Sunday morning to Gruagach, the fair-haired daughter of the Sun. As the ancient Romans were wont to offer libations of milk on behalf of their cattle, so did these

poor islanders. Whenever the cattle of St. Kilda were moved from one pasture to another, they were sanctified with salt, water, and fire, and prayer was offered on their behalf at this stone.

Another survival of olden days was the reverence in which the people of St. Kilda held three sacred wells, which were honoured with votive offerings of rags, shells, and pebbles. One well was reputed to cure deafness.

As a reminder of early Christian days, there were three old chapels in different parts of the isle, known as Christ's Church, St. Brennan's, and St. Columbus'.

But to return to the boats. Mr. Macaulay records another curious incident of the chances of island life. He notes how the population of St. Kilda had diminished since Martin's visit—a period of less than seventy years. Martin found on the isle one hundred and eighty persons, Macaulay found eighty-four, *i. e.* thirty-four males and fifty females. (These have now decreased to seventy-seven.) He learnt that in A.D. 1730 small-pox had been introduced to the isle by some clothes which had belonged to a man who had died on Harris, and whose effects had most unfortunately been carefully sent to his home. In the absence of any medical adviser, the people were wholly ignorant how to treat this unknown scourge, which of course carried them off wholesale. Of the twenty-one families, only four grown-up persons and twenty-six orphans survived.

Strange to say, one-half of the survivors owed their preservation to the fact that they (three men and eight boys) had gone to one of the islets to capture solan geese. The boat, as usual, returned to St. Kilda, and just then the awful pestilence broke out. No one was able to man the boat, and go to the rescue of the isolated fowlers, who vainly stormed and lamented over this unaccountable desertion. There they remained, in strictest quarantine, from August until May, when the usual ministering angel, in the shape of the factor's boat, came to the rescue, and brought them back to find the isle depopulated, and the turf growing green over the graves of wives and parents, brothers, sisters, and little ones.

With this tradition still vividly remembered, we need scarcely



wonder that the first feeling of the islanders on seeing any unknown vessel approach is one of dread, lest it should prove the means of bringing from the mainland some new fever or other infectious malady.

Now St. Kilda possesses four or five boats of sufficient size to fish just round the island for lythe, ling, cod, and mackerel (they do not attempt the herring fishery). They have one boat a little larger, in which (under pressure of great need) the five men of whom I spoke made their adventurous voyage to Dunvegan, in April 1883 (a voyage which they themselves said that few men in the Western Isles would have attempted). Happily the people of St. Kilda have never yet lost one of their number by drowning, though some time ago they lost their best boat in a storm.

While all other isles are petitioning Government for aid in impossible forms, the men of St. Kilda only plead for a larger boat, yet not so large that they cannot haul it up on the shore. A decked boat, they say, would be useless to them. Their ideal of a desirable boat is one with twenty-five feet keel, and nine feet seven inches of beam. They also greatly desire the construction of a pier, to lessen the danger of attempting to land in foul weather, which they are sometimes unable to do, and have to face the storm and run round the island to seek such shelter as they can obtain in a little creek on the further side.

They further express an earnest hope that the island may be endowed with a doctor, and also with a schoolmaster who can teach the children English as well as their Gaelic mother tongue. Would that all the grievances of the Western Isles could be as easily remedied as the simple wants of these hardy men of St. Kilda!

## CHAPTER XI.

## A ROYAL FUGITIVE.

“Ye trusted in our Hieland men,  
They trusted you, dear Charlie,  
They kent your hiding in the glen,  
Death and exile braving.  
English bribes were all in vain,  
Tho’ poor—and poorer we maun be,  
Siller canna buy the heart  
That beateth aye for thine and thee.”

WHENEVER you make up your mind to come and explore these islands, I advise you, before starting, to rub up your Jacobite lore ; for you will find stories about Prince Charlie springing up from every rock and cave ; and the Highlanders will think you sadly ignorant, if they find you wanting in knowledge on so important a topic.

Being myself one of the ungifted many, with scant memory for biography, and less for history, I took the precaution of reading up all manner of Jacobite books ; and from these (more especially from ‘Browne’s History of the Clans’) managed to trace Prince Charlie’s wanderings from island to island ; and I think it may save you some trouble, if I give you a short sketch thereof.

Of course you remember how, after the terrible defeat of Culloden, 1745, Charles escaped first to the wilds of Ross-shire. This being too hazardous a hiding-place, he embarked in an open

boat for the Hebrides. A violent storm arose ; rain pouring in torrents, and vivid lightning, which only revealed the blackness of raging waters on every side, while thunder crashed over the heads of the little company. They had no compass, and had to drive before the wind, fearing lest the fury of the waves should dash them on the coast of Skye, where the Government had troops watching for the Prince.

To their intense relief, when the day broke, they found themselves on the coast of Benbecula, a small island lying between North and South Uist, and connected with both by fords, through which at low water you can drive or walk. These, together with Harris and Lewis, form the Long Island ; though, in point of fact, the sound of Harris completely divides the two latter from the former. Here, for a while, Charles found safety in a deserted hut.

His pursuers, stimulated by the promised reward of £30,000 for his apprehension, were not idle. Being fully convinced that he had found refuge in the isles, they adopted the plan of taking the furthest point first, and sailed to St. Kilda. The terrified inhabitants fled, and concealed themselves in their rocky caves and cliffs. Some of them were, however, captured, and brought before General Campbell, who inquired what had become of "The Pretender," to which they replied that they had never heard of such a person ; but they believed that their laird (Macleod) had lately been at war with a woman at a great distance, and had overcome her. This, they said, was all they knew of the affairs of the world.

Meanwhile, in the hut on Benbecula, the bonnie Prince, taking the old sail of the boat as his only bed, slept the sleep of the weary, on the hard earth ; and two days later, he and his little party sailed for Stornoway, hoping to pass themselves off as the shipwrecked crew of an Orkney boat, and so be able to hire a vessel, under pretext of returning home, and thus escape to France. A violent gale, however, compelled them to put in at the small island of Scalpa (or Glass), near Harris, where they assumed the name of Sinclair, and, in their character of Orkney merchants, were hospitably entertained by a farmer, who insisted on their remaining

with him while one of the party went on to Stornoway to hire a vessel.

This being done, Charles again sailed ; and again the wind was contrary, and he was compelled to land in Loch Seaforth, in the island of Lewis, whence on a dark and rainy night he had to walk over a wild and trackless waste. The young Highlander who acted as his guide, lost his way, and so it was not till the following day at noon, that they reached Stornoway ; a fortunate accident, inasmuch as the Presbyterian minister of South Uist had sent information that the Prince had landed with 500 men to burn the town and carry off the cattle ; in consequence of which, the inhabitants were all rising in arms to oppose him.

As it was, a trusty friend came to meet him at the Point of Arynish, half a mile from the town, bringing provisions, which the wanderers sorely needed, having tasted nothing for eighteen hours, during which they had been drenched to the skin. Here a shelter for the night was procured, and a cow bought and slaughtered, the Prince taking his share in the rough cookery, mixing oatmeal with the brains of the cow, and making cakes, which he baked before the fire.

The captain of the vessel which they had hired now positively refused to stand by his engagement ; so the Prince had once more to sail from these inhospitable shores, and take refuge on the smaller islands ; a desolate rock called Iffurt, or Euirn, being his next hiding-place for a few days. A roofless hut was his sole shelter ; one of the little band keeping watch while the others slept.

This becoming unendurable, it was resolved to return to Scalpa. Not daring to remain there, they started once more. A hard night's rowing followed, the sea being dead calm ; but towards morning the wind rose, and they scudded along the coast of Harris.

Now a new danger threatened them. They were detected by a man-o'-war, and chased for three leagues, till they escaped among the rocky inlets about Rodel. After this, they kept close in shore, along the creeks of North Uist, when they were espied by another war-ship, which was lying in Loch Maddy. This also gave them

chase, when they again narrowly escaped, and once more landed on Benbecula; soon afterwards such a storm arose as drove away the ships, and gave the fugitives breathing time.

All this time their sole food consisted of oatmeal, mixed with salt water—as they had no fresh—and washed down with a dram of brandy which they fortunately had on board. Great was their rejoicing when they succeeded in capturing as many crabs as filled a small pail, which Charles himself carried to a miserable hut two miles distant. The door was so low that they could only crawl in on hands and knees till they dug away an entrance.

Here they remained for several days, during which a welcome present of half a dozen shirts, shoes, and stockings, and needful food, was sent by Lady Clanranald, whose husband, Macdonald of Clanranald, was lord of the island, and faithful to his Prince, for whom he contrived a more secure hiding-place in the Forest House of Glen Coradale, in South Uist. The house not being water-tight, two cows' hides were placed upon sticks to prevent the rain from falling on him when asleep.

On this island there was abundance of game, by pursuit of which Charles wiled away the weary hours, as well as kept the pot boiling. Here he remained for upwards of a month in perfect confidence, although his hiding-place, and the promised reward of £30,000 for his apprehension, were alike known to upwards of a hundred of the poor islanders.

Meanwhile every creek and ferry along the shore was guarded by cutters, sloops of war, and frigates, and upwards of 1500 militia, as well as some regular troops, were landed in different parts of the Long Island. At length the peril became so imminent that he dared remain no longer in South Uist, and again fled, in an open boat, first to the tiny islet of Ouia, thence to Rossinish, and again to Loch Boisdale, backwards and forwards, always in imminent danger. At one time no less than fifteen sail were in sight. There were days when they were so hard pressed that all hope seemed lost, and when no food could be obtained save the limpets and seaweeds which they gathered on the rocks.

At last they had to disperse their little band, and Charles, keeping

with him only one companion, O'Neil, returned to Benbecula, where happily he found a kinswoman of Clanranald, namely Flora Macdonald, a name thenceforth honoured among women. She was the daughter of Macdonald of Milton, in South Uist; but her father died in her infancy, and her mother married secondly Macdonald of Armadale, in Skye, who commanded one of the militia corps now in pursuit of the Prince.

Flora was at this time aged four-and-twenty, a woman fair to look upon, and as wise and lovable as she was fair. Her own description of the Prince, whom she now met for the first time, is that he looked thin and delicate, utterly worn out by fatigue, yet "showing such cheerfulness and fortitude as none could credit but those who saw him."

Now came the celebrated plan for his escape to Skye, disguised as her tall Irish maid Betty Burke—a difficult matter, as even she and her man-servant were taken prisoners by the militia while attempting to cross the ford on their return to Ormaclade (Clanranald's house), where she was to procure the necessary feminine raiment. They were detained all night, and next morning were taken before the commanding officer, who, happily, turned out to be Armadale, her step-father, from whom she procured the necessary passports, including the name of "her spinning-woman." There is little doubt that he more than suspected who the Irish maid really was.

Flora Macdonald now sent a message to bid the Prince join her at Rossinish; but how to do so was the difficulty, as both the fords were guarded. At length a small boat was procured, and, after many difficulties, he arrived, drenched to the skin and exhausted with hunger and fatigue. Here he was rejoined by Flora Macdonald, Lady Clanranald, and Mrs. Macdonald. They found him roasting the heart of a sheep on a wooden spit, and he met their commiserations with cheery words and jokes at his own expense. They all dined together, and afterwards Betty Burke's homely dress was produced. It consisted of a flowered linen gown, a quilted petticoat, white apron, and cloak of dun camlet with hood, as worn by the Irish peasants.

In the evening they went to the sea-shore, near where the boat lay, when a messenger rushed down to say that a large party of soldiers was at the house in quest of Charles. Lady Clanranald at once returned home, and was cross-examined as to the cause of her absence. She said she was visiting a sick child.

While the Prince and Flora were waiting on the shore, four boats full of armed men sailed close past them, happily without detecting them, as they lay hidden behind the rocks. As soon as the darkness covered their escape, they set sail, and during an anxious and stormy night, made more anxious by having no compass, Charles inspired the crew with songs and stories.

When morning broke they were thankful to find they were off Skye, near the point of Waternish. Here, however, they were fired upon by MacLeod's militia, who called to them to land, a summons to which they paid no heed, and continued to row on, but slowly, so as to prevent suspicion. The MacLeods continued to fire till the boat got out of range, no one, however, being hurt; and in due time the fugitives reached Monkstadt, where they landed.

Monkstadt, or Mogstat, belonged to Sir Alexander MacDonald, then serving with the Duke of Cumberland at Fort Augustus. His wife, Lady Margaret, was a daughter of the Earl of Eglinton, a true Jacobite, as her husband also was at heart, though too timid to declare himself for the Prince.

Flora went at once to the house, fortunately accompanied only by her man-servant, for there she found an officer commanding a detachment of militia, who questioned her closely about her journey, but was satisfied with the simplicity of her account. Lady Margaret, on hearing of the arrival of the Prince, left Flora to keep the officer in play, and taking Macdonald of Kingsburgh into the old garden, confided to him the state of affairs, and it was agreed that his house would be the best hiding-place for the present.

He therefore went down to the shore to seek for Betty Burke, and they started together on foot. To disarm all suspicion, Flora dined with Lady Margaret, and helped her to entertain her military guest. Afterwards she started on horseback, accompanied by a

Miss Macdonald, who was returning home escorted by two servants. The latter, on overtaking the pedestrians, were struck by the tall woman stalking along beside Kingsburgh, and exclaimed that it must either be an Irishwoman or a man in woman's dress. "Bless me," said the maid, "what lang strides the jade takes, and how awkwardly she manages her petticoats!" Flora quickened her pace and soon distanced the walkers, rejoicing when she reached the turn of the road where Miss Macdonald and her prying maid were to turn aside. Then she turned down the path to Kingsburgh, to which a short cut across the hills had brought the Prince at the same time, that is, about 11 p.m.

The lady of the house had gone quietly to bed, when her daughter ran up to tell her that her father had brought to the house the "most odd, muckle, ill-shaken-up wife that ever she seed, and taken her into the hall too!"

The good wife hastened down to welcome her husband's guest, but when the strange Irishwoman rose and gave her a kiss of greeting, according to the old Highland custom, she suspected that it must be some nobleman or gentleman in disguise, and, going aside to her husband, asked if he had any tidings of the Prince. On hearing that he himself stood before her, the anguish of having only such homely fare as bacon and eggs ready to offer him, and the overwhelming pride of being made to sit down at table with him, were almost too much for the good woman. She was greatly horrified on hearing that the boat in which he had come to Skye had at once been sent back to South Uist, as she said there was great risk of capture, and of the boatmen being tortured to make them confess what they knew. And this proved to be precisely what did happen, and resulted in the men even giving a minute description of his disguise.

To the infinite satisfaction of the Prince, it was decided that he should resume the garb of Old Gaul, his host giving him a Highland dress of his own, which he was to put on when safely out of the house, and out of danger of being discovered by the servants. As the women were fastening on his cap, Mrs. Macdonald of Kingsburgh bade Flora ask for a lock of his bonnie hair. This



she refused to do, but the Prince, gathering the meaning of the request, which was made in Gaelic, laid his head on Flora's lap and bade her cut off a lock herself, a precious relic, which the ladies dearly treasured. His hostess likewise treasured the sheets in which he had slept, and vowed they should never be washed or used till her death, when they should serve as her winding-sheet, to which use they were accordingly put.

Meanwhile it was decided that the Prince, with a little gillie for his guide, should walk across the hills to Portree, while Flora rode round the other way. The object was to get to the isle of Raasay, which was then clear of troops, but it was impossible to trust a Portree crew, so how to reach the island was the next question. At length the young MacLeods of Raasay, one of whom had been sorely wounded at Culloden, recollected that a small boat lay on a fresh-water loch about a mile inland from Portree, and these brave brothers, with the help of some women, contrived to drag the boat over soft bog and rocky ground till they reached the shore. The boat was old and leaky, but the two brothers, with only the help of a little boy, rowed it over to Raasay, where they found their cousin, and having got a seaworthy boat, they returned to Portree.

By this time Charles had arrived across the hills, thoroughly drenched by the pitiless rain, as many an English tourist has since been while trying the same route, only much as they have occasionally grumbled at the lack of refinement of the old Portree Hotel, it is a very different story to what it was in those days, when the Prince could not even get a drink of milk, nothing but whiskey and water; and the only substitute for a tumbler was a dirty-looking bucket, used by the landlord for baling out the boat. Not even one of those large scallop-shells out of which spirits were commonly drunk, seems to have been forthcoming—(the shells alluded to in old Gaelic, when Ossian's banquet-hall is called "the hall of shells," the host "the chief of shells," the feast "the joy of shells"<sup>1</sup>).

<sup>1</sup> The drinking-shell, or Sligà-crechin, was long used in Northern dairies for skimming milk.

Charles for once did stare at this obnoxious drinking *cuach*, but a whisper from Donald Roy reminded him of caution, so he took a great gulp of water, lest his over-refinement should excite comment. The faithful Donald Roy Macdonald was also alarmed at Charles's extravagance in refusing the change for a sixpenny-bit, in payment of four pennyworth of tobacco, and equal carelessness in refusing silver change for a guinea.

The Prince had now to bid farewell to the leal woman who, at the imminent risk of her own life, had rescued him from so many perils, and whom he was never to meet again. He presented her with his own miniature, and departed before daybreak, carrying his own meagre store of provisions, a cold fowl and some sugar in one bundle, four shirts in another, a bottle of brandy and one of usquebaugh hanging from his belt. Notwithstanding this Robinson Crusoe-like appearance, Donald Roy was subjected to close questioning by his landlord, who said he thought it must be the Prince in disguise, for he looked so noble. However, he was put off the scent by a feigned confidence, and the Prince, having lain concealed on the shore till midnight, escaped to Raasay with the faithful MacLeods. Here they found the forsaken hut of some shepherds, and soon gathered masses of heather as bedding, no bad couch when closely packed with the fragrant blossoms upwards, and (this was in the month of July) a more springy mattress could hardly be desired.

In this little island there seemed to be comparative safety, but Charles could not rest, and insisted on crossing over to Trotternish in Skye, a distance of fifteen miles. The sea was very rough, and his men sorely demurred, but Charles, as usual, encouraged them with stories and Gaelic songs, which he had picked up, together with some knowledge of that language, during these wanderings.

The men rowed with a will, and though the waves were boisterous, and there was a very violent surf along the shore, they contrived about midnight to land at Nicholson's Rock near Scorebreck, drenched, of course. A steep and difficult scramble led them to an old cow-house, the only shelter they could obtain on the bleak, desolate coast. Here they divided a wretched meal of mouldy

oat-cake and cheese, and then, soaked as they were, slept till daylight. In addition to other discomforts, the luckless Charles was tormented by toothache,—no great wonder !

In the morning he dismissed all his companions save Malcolm MacLeod, whom he desired to conduct him to Strath, Mackinnon's country, a long and perilous journey across the island, in continual risk of meeting soldiers. They chose the wildest and most mountainous route, and having agreed that the Prince should pass as MacLeod's gilly, they exchanged clothes, and Charles kept up the character by walking some steps in the rear, carrying their joint bundle, and touching his bonnet when addressed by his master in presence of any chance passer-by. As they neared Mackinnon's country they feared the disguise would prove insufficient, whereupon Charles pocketed his bonnet and wig and bound his head with a handkerchief ; he also tore the ruffles from his shirt and the buckles from his shoes, which he fastened with a string. Nevertheless, his graceful mien and carriage betrayed him to two men of Mackinnon's clan, who, on recognizing him, wept bitterly. They were sworn to secrecy on a naked dirk, and kept their oath.

A weary march of twenty-four Scotch miles, equal to thirty English, brought them to Ellighiul, near Kilmaree, where MacLeod's sister, in her husband's absence, gave them a cordial welcome, and such a supper as seemed to the famishing creatures kingly indeed. Charles showed due reluctance to sit down at table with his supposed master, who, of course, insisted on his doing so. But when a stout Highland lass brought water to wash MacLeod's feet, and he bade her do likewise for the sick lad, Lewis Caw, his servant, her pride revolted at such a suggestion, and it needed much coaxing to induce her to obey, which at last she did, but so roughly that Charles had to cry for mercy ! Utterly exhausted, the travellers now lay down for a few hours' sleep, but the restless mind would not suffer the weary body to lie still, and Charles arose and busied himself nursing Mrs. Mackinnon's wee bairn.

Her husband was now seen approaching the house, and on hearing who his guest was, he was transported with joy, and wished at

once to make his obeisance. MacLeod, however, reminded him of the danger of being observed by servants, so he entered the room, determined to pass by "Lewis Caw" without notice, but the faithful Highlander had counted too much on his strength of will, for on seeing the Prince he burst into tears, and had to leave the room.

The laird of Mackinnon was now informed of the presence of the loved fugitive, and the old chieftain could not rest till he had done him homage, and conducting him to a neighbouring cave, presented him to Lady Mackinnon, who had prepared a dinner of cold meat, bread, and wine. Towards dusk he embarked, accompanied by the two Mackinnons, and, having narrowly escaped capture by the men-o'-war, succeeded after a rough voyage in reaching the coast of Loch Nevis in Moidart.

His further adventures on the mainland continued to be as perilous as those in the Hebrides, but being foreign to our present object, it is unnecessary to follow him further.

Of the friends who had hitherto shared his danger, the majority were shortly captured on suspicion of having aided his concealment, but, for the most part, were released after a term of imprisonment. Flora Macdonald was amongst the number; her beauty and her wit brought her favour with her jailors, and after a term of honourable captivity, she was released at the special request of Frederick, Prince of Wales; and, being invited to the house of Lady Primrose, in London, became an object of considerable interest to the great folk there.

In due time she returned to Skye, and married young Macdonald of Kingsburgh, whom she accompanied to America twenty-five years later, there making a home for her family, which consisted of five sons and two daughters. Having suffered sore privations during the American war, she once more returned to her native island, and there peacefully ended her days.

She was buried in the old kirkyard of Kilmuir (the cell of Mary), on the high ground overlooking the Long Island, and the sea; across which she had, amid so many perils, brought her Prince in safety to the old house of Monkstadt, on the shore below. At the

time of our visit to Skye, a little mound of earth, half hidden by rank weeds and tall grasses, alone marked the spot where sleeps the dust of one whose honoured name is now a household word. Soon afterwards a very handsome Iona Cross of red granite was erected; and the Highlanders, willing to atone for having left this tribute so long unpaid, took care that the modern cross should over-top the highest of the ancient monolith crosses. The best known to us of these are MacLean's and St. Martin's crosses at Iona, which measure respectively eleven and fourteen feet. The new cross on Kilmuir was a monolith of eighteen feet six inches in height, placed on a basement ten feet high.

Unfortunately, being in a very exposed situation, the new cross seems to have excited the enmity of the wild winds, which, ere long, blew so mightily, that they overthrew it. In its fall it was broken and much injured; it was, however, repaired and set up more strongly than before, though shorn of much of its stature. Nevertheless, as the old kirkyard in which it stands lies 300 feet above the sea, Flora Macdonald's grave will henceforth become a landmark for every ship that sails these stormy seas.

“ Far over the hills where the heather grows green,  
And down by the Corrie that sings to the sea,  
The bonnie young Flora sat sighing her lane,  
The dew on her plaid, and the tear in her e’e.

“ She gazed on the bark, on the breezes that swung  
Away on the wave, like a bird of the main,  
And aye as it lessened, she sighed and she sung;  
Fareweel to the lad I maun ne’er see again,  
Fareweel to my hero, the gallant and true,  
The crown o’ thy Fathers is torn frae thy brow.”

## CHAPTER XII.

## LEGENDS AND FOLK-LORE.

Tidal Current off Vaternish—Scotch Bagpipes—Associations—Dunvegan Castle—Legend of Somerled—MacLeods and MacDonalds—Ancestral Relics—Fate of Lady Grange—Summer Nights—Seals—Cormorants—Star-Fish—Fish accounted fit for Food—Eels—Turbot—Of Scaleless Fish—Forbidden Meats—Drawing the Nets—Lump-Fish—Jelly-Fish—Barnacle Geese—Families who claim Descent from Seal-Maidens or Mermen—Corn-crakes.

ONCE more the beauty of bright summer days tempted us to a further cruise; this time to MacLeod's country, in the west of Skye.

If you glance at a map of the Isle, you will perceive that Uig, which was always our starting-point, is a small harbour on Loch Snizort, while Dunvegan lies on Loch Follart. These two sea-lochs are separated by a great headland—Vaternish Point—off which flows the most singular tidal current I have ever encountered.

On either side of the headland the sea was perfectly, glassily calm, and the little yacht flew on her way so steadily, that we were scarcely conscious of motion. Suddenly we entered a belt of tossing, raging waters, breaking in great three-sided waves, which came dashing right over the deck—very grand and beautiful. The steersman, who but a moment before could have guided our course with one finger, now found that he had work enough on hand. This battlefield of the waves is about two miles in width. Having

crossed it safely, we once more found ourselves in calm water, gliding smoothly along, before a favouring breeze.

The sunset was one of never-to-be-forgotten loveliness. Intensely brilliant gold and yellow, with soft misty clouds, giving place to brightest rose-colour, ere yet the blue ground-work of the sky had paled. And the hills were flooded with softened crimson, and every tint was reflected in the waters, till twilight crept on, and the whole surface of ocean became like clear green liquid glass. Then, in the beautiful clear moonlight, we rounded Dunvegan Point, and

#### DUNVEGAN CASTLE.

at midnight anchored in the quiet harbour just below the Castle, which, with its foundation of grey rock, lay reflected as in a glassy mirror.

Long before the rosy flush of morning had faded into the wan grey day, I was off in the wee boat, and got a sketch of the old historic Castle; then, landing, I roamed about the woods, and noted the wealth of wild flowers, more especially the golden mimulus, which was growing in rank profusion.

Laden with dewy treasures, I returned on board, just as the

morning pipes were tuning up with the usual "Hi! Johnnie Cope," to which in due time MacLeod's piper gave answer from the Castle terrace.

I must say that those who object to pipe music as being discordant, can never have heard it with the right accompaniments of time and place; and if there be one corner of Scotland more than another, where its wailing pathos is thoroughly in keeping with the wild beauty of nature, it is in these isles, where, I grieve to say, it is much discouraged by some of the ecclesiastical authorities, who imagine that "the mirth of tabrets and the joy of harp" are in some mysterious manner the parents of evil, and that the bagpipes are the very incarnation of mischief. Evidently the tradition which tells how the shepherds played their pipes at Bethlehem finds small favour with them, and the Christmas piping of the Italian *pifferari* in memory thereof, would doubtless be held criminal indeed.

I believe that in Barra, and South Uist, where the majority of the people are Roman Catholics, the merry-hearted still have a fair share of "music and dancing." In Skye, Harris, and North Uist, however, these vanities are discouraged to such an extent, that the mirth of the land is gone. No longer do we hear of a piper following the reapers in the harvest-field, and keeping behind the slowest workers to cheer and animate them. The pipes are being put down most effectually, or, at least, are being subjected to a most unfair persecution. Would that it might work its usual result, and that the persecuted pipes might sound once more on every hill-side in Scotland! Meanwhile, I hear of one instance after another in which the luckless musicians have refused to tune up as of old, in accordance with promises extorted by their wives and other spiritual guides.

Even the public-houses have in divers cases ejected the piper (though perfectly sober) the moment he volunteered a tune. Whiskey, he and his companions might have in abundance, but such ungodly mirth was not to be tolerated in a Christian man's house. The dismal history of the dancing elder of North Knapdale, in Argyleshire, who in 1868 was formally excommunicated



from the Free Kirk for the sin of dancing a reel at his son's wedding, is an instance which happens to have become public, because the worthy farmer, whose minister had declared "that dancing was a scandal, a sin and bitter provocation to the Lord," had the courage to appeal to a higher court, and succeeded in getting the first sentence reversed.

I fear that excellent minister must have had a very low opinion of those old Hebrew prophets who made use of such metaphors as to promise the Virgin of Israel that she should again go forth adorned, with her timbrels in the dances of them that make merry, and that both old men and young should rejoice together with her in the dance. Moreover, he must find a dire stumbling-block in those sounds of music and dancing which followed the killing of a certain fatted calf. Probably, like that elder brother, he would have turned away from the door.

But though the voice of song is silenced, the light wine of the country is by no means at a discount; whether in the street or the bothy, it holds full sway, and whatever noise of rejoicing may greet your ear, probably owes its origin to the barley bree.

There was formerly a piper's college in Skye, which gave regular diplomas to its best men.<sup>1</sup> It was under supervision of the MacCrimmons, who from generation to generation held office as MacLeod's hereditary pipers. There was a certain cave where MacCrimmon's disciples were wont to study, alone and unheard. A rock overhanging the sea was the piper's seat, where he might

<sup>1</sup> The Saxons who pretend to shudder at our pipe music, quite forget that the bagpipe was an English musical instrument of very old standing. Chaucer has recorded of his miller, that "A bagpipe well coude he blowe and sowne;" and it is further stated that this was the music which cheered the Canterbury pilgrims on their journey. The instrument itself is represented on divers old English carvings; such as in a church at Cirencester, which dates from the time of Henry the Eighth. It also occupies a prominent place on the organ screen in the chapel at Magdalen College, Oxford, which represents the celestial choir with their divers instruments of music. One comfortable-looking angel is shown working his drone cheerily. This organ screen, though itself somewhat modern, is copied in all its details from ancient carvings. The pipes are also found carved in old Melrose Abbey, and on certain stones in the Orkneys.

practise unmolested to his heart's content, with such wild surroundings, waves, cliffs, and echoes, as might best teach him to interpret Nature's own rare melodies. The college endowment was a farm, which Macleod gave rent-free. When the value of land rose, he ventured to reclaim a portion of the ground, an insult which the minstrels could not brook, so they arose and went their ways, leaving their rock music-hall to the seals and cormorants.

MacDonald's pipers, the MacCarters, had a similar college at Peingowen. Their practising-ground was a green hillock called Cnocphail. Various other families were noted for their hereditary talent as pipers, but the names of these two are well-nigh as historical as those of their masters. That piper's golden age is now, alas! a thing of the past. Not past, however, is the inspiring power of the shrill notes which stir the inmost heart of every true-born Highlander. So well did the English know their influence, that when, after the dispersion of Prince Charlie's troops, the unhappy pipers tried to plead that they had not carried arms against the King, it was decided that their pipes were truly instruments of war. And so, in truth, they may be called, for no Highland regiments would advance to battle without the war-pipe of the Gaël to inspirit them, and often the piper has fallen in the thickest of the fire while cheering his comrades to victory with his most soul-inspiring music.

There have been instances (as in the case of the 78th Highlanders at Argaum) when it has been necessary to silence the pipes as the only means of restraining the men from breaking the line and rushing upon the foe before the time. In various other cases, the sudden burst of "the gathering" has been the signal for such a charge as has caused the foe to fly utterly discomfited. Among the stories of old days are several memories of the pipers at Waterloo; how the pipe major of the 92nd stood on a hillock where the shot was flying like hail, without thought of danger, only bent on cheering his comrades with the inspiring notes. One of his brother pipers received a shot in the drone at the beginning of the battle, whereupon, half mad with rage, he drew his broadsword, and rushed into the thickest of the fight to wreak vengeance

on the destroyers of his precious pipes, whose fate he soon shared.

When the piper of the 71st was advancing at the battle of Vimiera, he was wounded in the leg by a musket-ball, and utterly disabled. Nevertheless, he swore his pipes should do their work, and sitting on the ground, he managed, in spite of his pain, to keep up such warlike notes as might best inspire his brethren, and well they fought that day.

At the storming of Ciudad Rodrigo it is recorded that McLauchlan, piper to the 74th Highlanders, being foremost in the escalade, marched calmly along the ramparts, playing "The Campbells are coming," till a shot, piercing his bagpipe, silenced its music. He quietly sat down on a gun-carriage, and, amid a storm of shot and shell, repaired the damage, and speedily tuned up again, to the entire discomfiture of the foe, for as Scott has it—"When the pibroch bids the battle rave," "Where lives the desperate foe that for such onset staid?"

" . . . . For with the breath which fills  
 Their mountain pipe, so fill the mountaineers  
 With the fierce daring, which instils  
 The stirring memory of a thousand years,  
 And Evan's,—Donald's fame, rings in each clansman's ears!"

You remember Napier's high praise of the brave Highland regiments, who rushed to the charge "with colours flying, and pipes playing, as if going to a review." Those who have led them in our own day, can best say how well this character has been kept up.

However little a Southron may be able to enter into this passionate enthusiasm for what, to his ear, seems shrill discord—he must bear in mind that, just as in him, the scent of a flower, or a few chords of old melody, will sometimes waken up a long train of forgotten memories; so, to one whose earliest love has been for the wild mists and mountains, these strains bring back thoughts of home, and the memory of the dead and of the absent comes floating back as on a breath from the moorland, mingling with a

thousand cherished, early associations, such as flood the innermost heart with hidden tears.

How often we have heard of men whose lives have been spent toiling in far-away lands till all home memories seemed dimmed; yet to whom, in hours of weakness, and pain, and death, the dear mountain-tongue came back, and with it, the longing that the wild music they loved in boyhood, might soothe their last hours.

I truly may bear witness how, twice within one year,<sup>1</sup> while

<sup>1</sup> Roualeyn Gordon Cumming died at Fort Augustus, March 24th, 1866, in the grey old fort, at the head of Loch Ness, which has now been demolished, and replaced by a Roman Catholic college. Dear to us is the memory of that strange sick room—its rude walls still bearing the names of the Duke of Cumberland's soldiers, carved in their idle leisure, but adorned with trophies of the chase, each one of which recalled to the dying Hunter some memory of triumph in the days of joyous health. Now his mighty strength was slowly ebbing, as night after night passed by in pain and weariness; yet to that Lion-like beauty each morning seemed to add a new refining touch of radiant Spirit-light—a Light that foreshadowed the Celestial Dawn.

Night and day, through long weeks of suffering, his faithful piper, Tom Moffat, never left his side, tending him with unwearied devotion, the love that “passeth the love of woman”—fanning his fevered brow with the wing of a Golden Eagle,—and ever ready, at his bidding, to tune up the old pipes, and play the wild melodies he most loved.

His elder brother, Sir Alexander Penrose Gordon Cumming, only survived him five months—five weary months of pain,—during which he too lay

“Dying in pride of manhood, ere to grey  
One lock had turned, or from his eagle face  
And stag-like form, Time's touch of slow decay  
Had reft the strength and beauty of his race.” \*

Far from his beautiful Highland home, and from the woods and river he loved so dearly, he lay, held prisoner by dire illness, in the dull town.

One night, shortly before his death, when, after long fevered hours of pain, he lay exhausted, yet unable to sleep, and the home-voices, usually so dear to him, seemed to have lost their spell, he exclaimed, “Oh! that I could hear a pibroch once more before I die!”

It seemed like a Heaven-sent answer to that cry, that at this moment, faint, but clear, there floated on the night-wind a strain of distant pipe-music. Nearer and nearer sounded the swelling notes, played by the piper of a Scotch

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\* ‘The Chieftain's Coronach.’ By his friend, Sir Noel Paton.

watching the last weary sufferings of two of the truest Highlanders that ever trod heather, I noted the same craving for "the dear old pipes," and the satisfied calm that drove away the tossing restlessness, as shrill pibroch, and wild, wailing lament succeeded one another, and at last brought sweet, peaceful sleep, which doctors' opiates had failed to procure.

Nor can I ever again listen to those piercing notes, without a vision of an early morning, when a dark funeral procession sailed up a misty loch, and thrilling pibrochs re-echoed from hill to hill, awakening the sea-birds, which circled round the boat with plaintive cries, as though they too were wailing for the "going away" of one who loved all wild and beautiful things and creatures.

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Dunvegan is the quaintest medley of the architecture of every age; each proprietor, from the ninth to the nineteenth century, having left his mark on the old castle. The oldest portion is a square tower, with walls of immense thickness (from nine to twelve feet), supposed to be the work of Norwegians. Its position is very fine, with surroundings of wood, Skye's rarest treasure, and standing on a mass of grey rock, which juts out into the sea; landlocked, —and, on this morning, calm as a mirror, reflecting each line of the old building, as the water lips round the foot of the crag. When the tide ebbs, there is revealed a broad belt of the richest brown and gold tangle, and yellow sand.

Before we had finished breakfast, the young master of Macleod came alongside in his canoe to bid us welcome; and the pleasant greetings of old friends soon consoled us for the pitiless rain which now commenced.

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regiment, who, when he learnt how precious to the ear of the dying Chie was this breath from the breezy hills, gladly halted, and made the dull street re-echo the notes of pibrochs and wild laments. "That is music," he murmured; and, when at length the piper went his way, the long-strung nerves were soothed, and the blessing of sleep, so long denied, —a deep refreshing sleep, —told how well the dear, dear music of the mountains had worked its spell.

"Music that gentlier on the spirit lies  
Than tired eyelids upon tired eyes."

As we landed, and passed up the steep ascent to the castle, visions of Viking came over us, and of the turbulent feasts and frays which these old walls have witnessed in a thousand successive years. Few homes possess so long a continuous history. We entered by a drawbridge, which spans the moat—an object always suggestive of days of sudden danger and of siege. And there are dungeons, of course, in the thickness of the walls—so-called dungeons at least—though, like those at Gordonstown, where, in the dear old days of our childhood, we played such merry games at hide-and-seek, I fancy these were rather devised for the safety of their inmates, than for the imprisonment of their foes.

The foes of the Macleods were generally the Macdonalds ; for, in spite of frequent intermarriages, the two clans were perpetually at feud, “ putting wedding rings on each other’s fingers, and dirks into each other’s hearts.”

Thus, the old Norse and the Celtic nature are fully combined in these races ; for the MacLeods were originally pure Norsemen, bearing such names as Torquil and Thormod (who were the two sons of the original ancestral Leod), while the Macdonald who built the old castle was a Celt. He gave his daughter (his only child) in marriage to Macleod of Harris ; and on one occasion, when rowing across the Minch to meet his son-in-law and grandchild, the two galleys came into collision in a thick mist. Tradition says that the dutiful daughter bade her husband steer on and strike her father’s smaller ship. Be that as it may, the little galley did sink, and Macdonald was drowned. Then MacLeod rowed over to Dunvegan, and took possession of it in the name of his wife.

Above the doorway of one of the offices, there is an old stone carving, where the arms of Macdonald are quartered with those of MacLeod, commemorating one of those strange political marriages which resulted in so little peace.

Through these, the Macleods, as well as the Macdonalds, claim descent from that old hero of many legends, the great Somerled, whose ruined castle we marked at Saddell, in Cantyre. He was the youngest and fairest son of Godfrey, lord of Argyle—a mighty hunter, to whom the men of the Western Isles made offer of their

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homage, if he would come over to Skye, and be their chief. Somerled was standing beside a dark river, when the Islesmen found him. He pondered for awhile on their words, then made answer, that if in yonder dark pool he caught a clean run salmon, he would go with them. If not, he would remain where he was.

In a few moments, a silvery fish lay on the bank, and a shout of joy from his new subjects proclaimed him their chief. Then he forsook his father's halls, and his beloved chase, and led his men to conquer neighbouring isles. Wild deeds of valour by land and sea, soon made his fame ring far and near; and in due time he became both Thane of Argyle and Lord of the Hebrides.

At his death, his eldest son Ronald became Lord of the Isles, while Dougal, the second son, succeeded to the territories on the mainland, and founded the family of MacDougal of Lorne; making his chief stronghold at the Castle of Dunstaffnage; thence ruling his country with an iron hand. Not that he was allowed to hold it undisturbed. On the opposite shore of Loch Awe, the Campbells were already established, and Cailean Mòr, the great Colin, Knight of Lochow, was not one tamely to own any superior. So there were fights and forays, fire and bloodshed, even till the days of the Bruce, against whom MacDougal fought with desperate hate, to avenge the murder of his wife's father, the Red Comyn.

Then the misty heights of Ben Cruachan, its dark passes, and the darker lake below, re-echoed the shouts of conflict, on many a hard-fought day. Dunstaffnage was besieged and taken, and the broad lands of Argyle were forfeited, and, after being held for awhile by the Stewarts, were conferred on the Campbells, who had proved staunch supporters of the Bruce in his dark hours of trouble.

On Sir Neil Campbell, who had fought "shouter to shouter"<sup>1</sup> with the King at Bannockburn, he bestowed the hand of his sister, the Lady Mary Bruce; nor was it long before the Chieftainship of Argyle and the Lordship of Lorne likewise passed into the same strong keeping. By a wise stroke of policy in love, Colin, the first Earl of Argyle, wooed and wedded the Lady Isabel, daughter of the

<sup>1</sup> Shoulder to shoulder.

Lord of the Isles, and consequently a direct descendant of Somerled, thus sealing the peace between the boar's head of the Campbells and the galley of the isles.

To return to the MacLeods in their sea-girt fortress. Among the treasures of Dunvegan is a green fairy flag, which some materialists believe to be only a relic of the Crusades—a consecrated banner of the Knights Templars, but which all true Highlanders affirm to have been a gift to some ancestral MacLeod, from a fairy maiden. She promised that on three distinct occasions when he or his clan were in danger, he might wave the flag with certainty of relief.

MacLeod proved false to his fairy, and married a mere commonplace human maiden, whereupon his spirit wife waxed wroth, and ordained that every woman in the clan should give birth to a dead child, and that all the cattle should have dead calves. Then a loud and bitter wail rang through the green valleys, and along the shores, and MacLeod, in sore tribulation, bethought him of the flag. The fairy proved more true to her words than her lover had been to his, so she withdrew her spell, and the clan once more flourished.

Then came a terrible battle, when MacLeod and his men were well-nigh routed, and again, though he must have been sorely ashamed of himself, he waved the flag, and the victory was his. Why the flag was not waved for the third time, when the isles were ruined by the failure of the kelp trade, or during the potato famine, MacLeod best knows. Perhaps he thought it well to save one "last tune in the old fiddle." At all events the green flag still lies in its old case, and is such a treasure as no other laird can show.

There is also a precious drinking cup, bearing date A.D. 993. It stands about ten inches high, on silver feet, and is curiously wrought in wood with embossed silver, once studded with precious stones, and still retaining some bits of coral. It bears an inscription, telling how certain old Norsemen died, trusting in Christ's mercy; and within the cup, the letters IHS are four times repeated. Hence we infer its original use as a chalice—though for many a

long year it has crowned the wildest scenes of revelling and drunkenness; such as were held in these wild fastnesses up to very modern days.

Another drinking trophy is Rorie Mhor's horn; an ox's horn with silver rim, which holds about five English pints; the old custom was that every young chief should prove his mettle by draining this horn, filled to the brim with claret, at a draught—but in this degenerate age of shams, a false lining within the horn enables the chieftain to pledge his vassals in a much shallower goblet.

Big Sir Roderick was one of James VI.'s knights, and his royal master seems to have taken an amiable interest in his sobriety, for we find his name in an order of the Privy Council for 1616, when it was enacted that MacLean of Duart, and Sir Rorie MacLeod, should not use in their houses, more than four tun of wine each; Clanranald was limited to three tun, and Coll, Lochbuy, and Mackinnon, were allowed but one—an attempt at compulsory reformation, which must have encouraged smuggling to an unwonted degree.

The horn is not the sole remaining trace of the Big Knight. Part of the castle was built by him, and a waterfall close by is still known as Rorie Mhor's nurse, because he loved its lullabies to hush his slumbers! On the opposite side of the loch are two high hills, known as MacLeod's Tables; and on their broad flat tops, the pure white snow lies unmelted, for long months, as though it were some spotless fairy napery.

MacLeod has his maidens also, three dark rocks rising from the sea, which, when seen through foam and mist, bear some fanciful likeness to the mermaids, whose murmurous songs should soothe the dreams of the old sea kings.

Near these rock-maidens is a cave, which for some time was the prison of the unhappy Lady Grange, wife of the Lord Justice Clerk; whose sad history is stranger than any fiction. In an evil hour she became aware that her husband and many of his friends were in league with the Jacobites in 1715. MacLeod and Macdonald agreed, for their mutual safety, to remove her to some

distant district and announce her death. So violently was this effected, that two of her teeth were knocked out in the struggle.

The unhappy lady was conveyed to Durinish, and kept in this dreary cave, whence she was removed to Uist; and then to St. Kilda, where she remained seven years. Just imagine this! Seven years in St. Kilda!! Dreading lest any clue to her existence might be discovered, her persecutors now brought her back to Uist, and to Skye, whence she contrived to despatch a letter to England, rolled up in a hank of wool.

The chance purchaser of this wool forwarded the letter, which thus reached its destination safely, and deliverance seemed at hand. A government boat was despatched in search of her, but failed in its quest, and her jailors carried her back to Innis-fada, the Long Island, carrying in the boat with her, a rope with noose and heavy stone attached, wherewith to sink her to the lowest depth of the sea, rather than suffer her to be rescued. The poor lady finally died in Skye, and was buried in the old kirkyard of Trumpan.

Gladly must she have welcomed the close of her sad life, for surely few of Eve's daughters have paid so dear for the acquisition of forbidden knowledge. Truly hateful in her ears must have been the ceaseless moaning of the wild waves—for ever singing the requiem of her life's gladness.

To us, however, rejoicing in the glorious liberty, and in the blessed summer sunlight, no day seemed half long enough; and we sought to lengthen each, by lingering on sea or on land, far into the beautiful night,—which in truth, in these Isles, means, in summer, no night at all, but one prolonged, dreamy twilight.

Endless was the delight of quietly exploring each bay and headland for miles round—never hurried,—for the very ideal of life in the Isles is to ignore Time. So we wandered where fancy prompted, seeking out strange wild creatures in their chosen homes, and trusting that our human presence might not too rudely scare them.

Sometimes, as we rowed very quietly along these broken shores, we caught glimpses of seals basking on favourite rocks; or else travelling along by a succession of jerks, wriggling as they move,

and displaying their wonderful flexibility of spine. If a seal is in the water, notice how rapid and graceful are his movements, and with what strength he swims; but he is so shy, that he will probably have vanished before you have well made him out. If wounded, however, and compelled to meet a foe at close quarters, a grip from his powerful jaws proves him not altogether a helpless victim.

I cannot imagine what peculiar fancy can lead him to swallow stones of quite a large size, which he does freely—indeed some seals which have been shot, have been found to contain quite a gravel bed. It really seems as if they had swallowed it for ballast—perhaps to counteract their own oily tendency to float!

Another marked peculiarity is the seal's peculiar deliberation in breathing. About two minutes elapse between each breath, even when he is basking on dry rocks, so that when he dives and wishes to remain under water, he can do so, with wonderful facility.

I believe it is a common error to suppose that it is to this seal that we are indebted for our beautiful soft brown seal-skin coats. The fur seal<sup>1</sup> (Genus *Otary*; so called from possessing an external ear) is found only in the Pacific and Southern Oceans, chiefly in the neighbourhood of the Falkland and South Shetland Isles; its silky brown fur underlies a compact coat of soft brownish-grey hair. Some of our coats are also made from the fur of the sea-otter,<sup>2</sup> which is a native of Behring's Straits, twice the size of the common otter; its fur is a rich black tinged with brown. Nevertheless, our own seal<sup>3</sup> possesses a silvery coat hidden beneath his rough grey hair, which is in great demand; this, together with his warm inner coating of blubber, has proved fatal to his peace, and he is now comparatively rare, greatly to the satisfaction of the salmon fishers, whose nets he often destroys in pursuit of the fish, to say nothing of his actually frightening the latter away from the coast.<sup>4</sup>

The cormorants, too, are keen fishers; you will see them pounce on their silvery prey, and gluttonously struggle to swallow it alive,

<sup>1</sup> *Otary Falklandica*.

<sup>2</sup> *Lutra Marina*.

<sup>3</sup> *Phoca Vitulina*.

<sup>4</sup> We gain some notion of the multitude of seals on the Newfoundland coast, and also of the wholesale manner in which they are hunted, by glancing at the

though it may be twice too big a mouthful, and wriggles most piteously during the process. Vast numbers of these weird black birds (scarts, we call them,) live in every cave along this rocky shore. They choose some quiet nook, where they heap up a mass of seaweed for their nest, and, with the unerring instinct of all sea-birds, select a spot where the highest spring-tide cannot touch them. Here they sit, guarding their homes, or else stand solemn and immovable on the rock ledges, and never stir as we enter the cavern, till, as we come close to them, a sudden flap from their dusky wings startles us, as though some spirit of darkness would resent our invasion. Then they dart to and fro with wild piercing cries, just as they do before stormy weather, when they come forth from their caves, as birds of ill omen to all sea-farers.

There is something so demoniacal about the bird, that the sight of it always recalls Milton's legend of its form, having been the first selected by the Arch-Fiend, when, perched on the Tree of Life, he overlooked with envious eye that fair garden, and plotted how to wreak his malice on the blissful pair. They are, however, capable of being trained as useful servants, and I often wonder why their fishing propensities are not turned to account in this country, as well as in the Celestial Empire, where vast numbers of

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cargoes of the Dundee Seal and Whale Fishing Company's Steamers, on returning from their first trip, in April 1883, as shown in the following list:—

<i>The Resolute</i> . . . . .	20,100 seals.
<i>The Thetis</i> . . . . .	25,000 „
<i>The Narwhal</i> . . . . .	13,000 „
<i>The Esquimaux</i> . . . . .	13,000 „
<i>The Arctic</i> . . . . .	10,000 „
<i>The Aurora</i> . . . . .	10,000 „

We may also form some estimate of the dangers encountered by the men engaged in this work, from the tidings forwarded two months later from St. John's, Newfoundland, where, on June 7th, 1883, news was received that thirty sealing schooners were immured in heavy ice-fields in the northern part of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and fifteen more in ice-fields north of the Straits of Belle Isle. All these crews were then reported to be starving. This information had been brought by ten men, who had volunteered to drag a boat twenty miles across the unbroken ice-field, and had thence succeeded in reaching the shore.

boats are employed solely for this fishery. In olden days, when cormorant-fishing was an English sport, and at the present time in Holland, a ring or leathern strap is fastened round the lower part of the throat, and the bird swallows as many fish as it can catch, and, on returning to its keeper, disgorges them.

On some parts of our own coast the cormorant is considered rather good eating; a happy combination of fish and fowl. Its fishy taste, however, is reduced by burying the bird in sand for four-and-twenty hours, and then skinning him, when he makes a tolerable soup.

The deep-sea fishing here is excellent. White fish of all sorts are abundant. There is one poacher, however, who proves sorely annoying to the toiling fishers. This is the little star-fish, which at once makes for the lines, and eats the bait, and though he pretty often gets hooked himself, as the penalty of his indiscretion, his useless death gives small satisfaction to the men whose night's labour has been wasted. Not content with this, he destroys vast quantities of bait by attacking the mussel scalps, of which he makes sad havoc, destroying thousands of young mussels.

The inhabitants of the various islands have each their peculiar notions as to what fish are good for food. Some will eat skate, some eat dog-fish. Some eat limpets and razor-fish, and, as a matter of course, those who do not, despise those who do. In olden times certain Highlanders used to cure hams of the seal, and I believe that in the Orkney Isles young seals are still esteemed a great delicacy. Whale was also occasionally eaten in these isles with certain herbs,—tolerably coarse food, but useful in the victualling of ships. That which was sent to bring over the Maid of Norway is especially stated to have had fifty pounds of whale among her provisions. Porpoises were also in much repute at that time; and at the coronation of Queen Catherine of France, wife of Henry V., the bill of fare included porpoise, garnished with minnows! Another most dainty bill of fare is recorded, of swans, cranes, and sea-gulls, eaten with bread sweetened with honey, and flavoured with spices.

On one point, however, I believe all agree, namely, in their

abhorrence of eels, which they look upon as a sort of water-serpent. To this day the prejudice exists, and though large quantities of great conger-eels are caught on the Argyleshire coast, and elsewhere, they are all at once despatched to London (with very much the same feeling as a Mahommedan servant provides an abhorred ham for the infidel dog, his master!) The fishers who capture these unclean monsters would rather starve than eat one themselves, regarding them as direct descendants of the Old Serpent of Eden.

If they *are* such, we might suspect their wily ancestor of having pursued his researches in the garden farther than we wot of, inasmuch as nothing short of having tasted the life-giving tree could account for the horrible vitality of the whole race; a race which utterly defies all common modes of death, as you may see any day, by turning out a basketful of eels, hours after you believe them to have been thoroughly killed,—still the thrill of life shoots with wave-like undulation along each fold of the writhing mass. Nay, you think you have secured death by severing the head from the body; yet woe betide the incautious finger that dares to examine that head too closely, for the sharp white teeth have lost none of their power, and can still inflict a vicious bite on the rash intruder.

Speaking of eels, I cannot resist telling you of the latest combination of the forms serpentine and satanic. On the occasion of a fancy ball, a gentleman, who shall be nameless, determined to appear in the form popularly ascribed to the Prince of Evil. A well-known Jew supplied the desired dress, but it was found that, as in the case of little Bo-Peep's celebrated sheep, the tail had been left behind. How to supply a new one was the question.

Suddenly a brilliant idea occurred to the poor tail-less demon. He repaired to the nearest umbrella shop, where he invested in the strongest, shiny, umbrella-skin. Thence passing on to the fish-monger's, he selected a fine healthy eel, in most active condition, just large enough to slip into the umbrella case, the ring at the further end allowing him breathing room. The said case being then attached to the dress, presented the appearance of a most lively tail in perpetual motion, wriggling and writhing;—now



twined round the wearer's neck, now round his waist, his arm, his leg—now moving aimlessly in mid-air, or darting suddenly towards some startled passer-by. In short it was a complete success and matter of amazement to all beholders, but to none more so than to the Jewish owner of the costume, who stood gazing in rapt admiration, offering free bribes if only this wonderful secret might be revealed to him !

The prejudice against eating eels is partly due to the fact that, although denizens of the sea, they are generally supposed (by men who only use their own natural eyes, and have not brought powerful microscopes to bear on the eel's fine coat of scaly armour) to be devoid of scales,—a form of animal life which, to the Celt, was particularly abhorrent.

This is a curious point for consideration, inasmuch as we know that the ancient Egyptians prohibited the use of scaleless fish on the ground of their being unwholesome ; and the Romans in like manner were forbidden to sacrifice such to their gods. The Israelites, too, were commanded by the Levitical law, " Whatsoever hath no fins, nor scales, in the seas and in the rivers, of all that moveth in the waters, that shall be an abomination unto you " (Lev. xi. 10).

So real is this prejudice on the part of the Celt, that it led to the total rejection of turbot, as being unmistakably scaleless.<sup>1</sup> So, even in the last generation, the poorest folk would not receive these despised dainties into their houses, and until very recent years, all the turbot taken even on the coast of Fife and Aberdeen were thrown away, as there was no sale for them, till the Saxon came north, and found that he could rescue fish, fit for an alderman's feast, almost for the trouble of taking them !

Strange indeed it is that such a prejudice as this should have

<sup>1</sup> While revising these pages for the press, I notice the following statement before the Royal Commission at Ness, Isle Lewis, on June 7th, 1883. A fisher, speaking in the name of the community, remarked that "*they often caught turbot on their lines, BUT THEY USED THEM ALL FOR BAIT.* Q.—Don't you know turbot sell high in London? A.—Yes ; but London is far from here. If they had eel bait, and good boats to allow them to go pretty far out, they could get a good deal of turbot."

led to the rejection of such an immense supply of good food. When you consider that 30 lbs. is not an uncommon weight for a turbot, and that some are even captured of more than double this weight,—and that, moreover, they are so prolific that one turbot, the roe of which weighed 5 lbs. 9 ozs., has been found to contain no less than 14,311,200 eggs,—it is evident that it ought to form a serious item in the general food-supply, as indeed it does further north, where a recent report from the coast of Jutland tells of the capture of 240,000 turbot, weighing on an average upwards of 1 lb. each.

Our Scotch fishers have learnt wisdom now, so far as supplying the market is concerned, but the would-be purchasers must remember to ask for “Roden Fluke” if he is on the east coast, as true turbot are known only by that name. Should he ask for turbot, he would be served with halibut, a very coarse fish of the same family, which occasionally attains an enormous size. One was captured at Wick a few years ago which weighed 231 lbs., and measured 7 feet 1 inch in length! Another, caught on the Northumbrian coast, weighed 294 lbs. !<sup>1</sup>

Doubtless the lack of scales was the true reason why many of the Islanders would on no account eat seal, dog-fish, or porpoise.

That *some* very marked prejudice with regard to fish existed among our ancestors, is evident from the assertion of an ancient author<sup>2</sup> that the people of Caledonia *never ate fish*.

It certainly is remarkable that in all Ossian's songs of the chase, when he skims over flood and field, rivers and seas, no allusion whatever is made to the catching of fish. Yet we find these, rudely carved on many holy stones, together with the mystic divining-mirror, which the sea-faring folk to this day declare to be always seen in the hands of mermaids. Their very realistic description of these fishy maidens and mermen answer precisely to the old accounts of the fish god and goddess, Dagon and Derceto, which

<sup>1</sup> These, however, are pigmies, compared with the halibut of America, which have been captured, weighing from 400 to 600 lbs! One weighing 600 lbs. was caught off Portland. Canada sent one weighing 475 lbs. to the London “International Fisheries Exhibition,” preserved in a plate-glass refrigerator.

<sup>2</sup> Dion Cassius.

were worshipped by the Syrians and Phœnicians, who, for their sakes, would eat no fish.

It certainly is very strange still to find among the people of these Isles traces of religious objection to the use of certain meats,—and then to note the identical prejudice in full force in far-distant lands.

To begin with,—all the creatures prohibited as unclean by the Levitical law were likewise abhorrent to the Celt, and though, in these modern, degenerate days, he may occasionally (not without serious qualms) be induced to eat hare or pig, he undoubtedly looks on both with repugnance. But of the birds pronounced unclean, none is ever eaten, save an occasional cormorant.

But Celtic prejudice goes beyond the prohibitions of the Levitical law. Till very recent years, it extended to the goose and other poultry; cocks, and occasionally hens, were reserved for sacrifice; but apparently here, as in many other countries, the goose was deemed too sacred for food—hence, doubtless, we find it carved on sacred stones, beside the sun-symbols.

A very curious point in connection with the meats deemed clean or unclean, is the fact that while domestic pork was held in abhorrence, the flesh of the wild boar was much esteemed.<sup>1</sup> In all old Gaelic lore the mighty hunters are described as feasting on the wild boars they have slain in the chase—as when Fingal and his son Ossian, and their band of heroes, devoured the boar Scrymmer.

I am not sure whether the Celtic objection to scaleless fish extends to flounders. Probably it does, as some of the fishers on the west coast believe the flounder (or, as they call it, fluke) to be a young turbot.

Drawing the salmon nets in the early morning was always a point of attraction to me. I was generally astir by 4 a.m.—the loveliest hour of a summer morning—and the sailor who had been on watch all night was glad enough to give me my lesson in rowing

<sup>1</sup> The same distinction is drawn by the modern Hindoo, who, while abhorring the domestic pig, does not object to feast on wild boar. The Hindoo also holds poultry in religious abhorrence, and will on no account taste it, or touch it. The poultry-market of India is therefore supplied either by Mahomedans, or by men too degraded to have any caste.

till it was time to return and awaken the crew at 6 a.m. So to the salmon nets I generally made my way, and a very exciting moment it is when the nets are hauled in—sometimes with a prize of bonnie silvery Fish—which of course means salmon exclusively, for to apply that sacred word to any less noble species would mark you ignorant indeed. I'd like to see old Lauchlan's face if you used it with reference to the lean, dark, long-nosed article he has just thrown back into the river. "Fish! indeed! Ou! it wasna a Fish! It was no-but a kelt!"

But fish or no fish, the nets are safe to draw up some curious treasures of the deep. Creatures such as you will see nowhere else, for they are so useless, that they are at once thrown back to Mother Ocean. Sea hedgehogs, and sea-urchins, and sea-hens, and queer beasts all head and fins, and young sea-serpents, and all manner of odd monsters. The gulls well know their chance of securing these prizes, and always follow the drawing of the nets; black-headed gulls, and kittiwakes, and graceful sea-swallows with their sharp wings and forked tails, hover expectantly around, with wild, musical cries. Gradually the line of floating corks narrows, and, as the net is drawn in, great agitation prevails among the captives, who flop about, and tumble over and over in dire dismay. Now a great fin appears, now a tail, now a nose, and quick flashes of silver tell what treasures will reward the fisher's toil.

Then, as the meshy prison is hauled in, an eager discussion goes on in Gaelic, and the silvery Fish are laid aside with honour due. After that their fellow-prisoners are sorted. White fish of all sorts—flounders, saithe, lythe, rock-codlings, skate, cuddies, which are young lythe, mackerel, and many another are judged worthy of human consumption, and the fishers teach us to call them by names unknown to ichthyologists, sometimes, perhaps, with a sly laugh at our ignorance. We point out something that we mistake for a haddock, and the skipper gravely says, "Na, it isna a haddock. I'm thinking it will be"—a pause reflective, so long that we wonder what is coming next. . . . "Weel, *likely* it will be—the son of a cod—or it may be the daughter!!"

But it is by no means all fish that comes to the net, for, as I

before said, all the quaintest, and, to you or me, the most interesting sea creatures, are thrown away with infinite contempt, when they give a shake and a wriggle, and dive into their beloved depths with all speed, provided they can escape the rapid swoop of rapacious, hungry-eyed gulls, who watch vigilantly over the nets, hoping for their share of the spoil.

Their reflections on the tenderness of the lords of the creation are probably highly subversive of discipline in our sea realms ; for the fishers are not tender in their handling, and generally administer such a parting blow on the head as ought to kill them, but unfortunately does not do so ; so they sink down " through their dim water world " with eyes battered, and bruised heads —perhaps, if they are big enough, with a gash from a clip in their side, and all this, because they are just what Heaven made them ; and enjoy dining off their lesser fellow-creatures just as much as we do ourselves.

One of the foes most hated by the fisher folk, is the dog-fish, with its sharp shark-like teeth and rough skin, like coarse sand-paper. It generally gets an extra blow, and wriggles away very sorely and sadly to its rock home. In some of the outermost isles, even this little shark is made available for human food, as it also is in West Cornwall, where the species known as rough-hound is made into morghi soup ; morghi being an ancient British word meaning sea-dog. (To an old Indian it might be suggestive of chicken-broth !)

Another creature which receives small pity from the fishers is known as the sea-pig. He is armed with sharp prickles down the back which make him rather an unpleasant customer.

Crabs too of all sorts and kinds come in, clinging to their dinner of fine large half-eaten fish, of which they make very short work ; and once in the boat, how they do run from side to side, giving each of their companions in misery a vicious nip as they pass !

Then there was a very odd fish, with a huge head and gaping jaws, in wonderful disproportion to his small lean body. He was like a Brobdingnagian species of the little miller's thumb of our fresh-water streams ; or still more like the sting-fish, which,

however, is said only to grow four or five inches long, whereas this creature was fully eighteen.

One queer animal that we occasionally caught was the lump-fish, a hideous, fatty creature, singularly grotesque in form. It is covered all over with rows of hard, rough lumps; and on its under-side is a hard, lumpy mass, whence it derives its name. Its flesh is soft and oily; hence it is esteemed one of the dainties of Greenland, and such cold, oil-loving regions. In this country we resign the delicious mor-el to the seals, who are said to be marvellously expert in flaying their rough-skinned prize, just as you would do a fine ripe peach, and swallow it with equal enjoyment.

It seems that this fish, in the course of his little life, passes through changes more numerous and quite as remarkable as the development of frog's spawn into tadpoles and full-grown frogs. When first he escapes from his tiny egg, he strongly resembles the said tadpole, with large head and slim body. The next transformation shows him still large-headed and smooth-skinned, and duly provided with fins. In his last stage he becomes the bloated creature I described, with head and fins alike buried in fat, and his whole body covered with coarse, rough tubercles. The fishers, who are apt to be somewhat hazy in their notions as to the changes undergone by various creatures, call this ludicrous fish a sea-hen; and they firmly believe it to be either the parent or child of the common jelly-fish—a statement which I was not in a position to disprove, so listened with polite, if incredulous, attention.

I did not then know through what strange and beautiful transformations some of these exquisite *medusæ* (sea-butterflies we might call them) pass in the course of their short summer-life.<sup>1</sup> How, when the autumn days draw on, and the mother jelly-fish knows that the time has come when she must melt away, and lose herself in ocean-foam, she lays thousands of tiny eggs, each covered with invisible hairs—movable hairs like the spines of the sea-urchin—whereby the little living eggs paddle their way to some safe hiding-places in the crannies of the rock, and there moor themselves.

<sup>1</sup> Those which are scientifically distinguished as *Lucernarida*, those “of the hidden eye,” their eyes being protected by a sort of hood.

Thus anchored, and secure from winter storms, they wait to see what will happen next.

Soon from each egg there grows a tiny stem, and from it spring delicate branches, and every branch is covered with minute cups, edged with little dainty arms—living arms, that float on every side. And when spring changes to summer, each graceful flower-like cup develops a new life, and buds and blossoms, and each fairy blossom proves to be a living rose,—a tiny jelly-fish, with thousands of fringe-like fingers; and the little creature frees itself from the stem, and floats away in the warm summer sea to commence its own life of gladness and independence.

The fishers will tell you of many a strange transformation, if you care to listen. Many of them still believe that the barnacles which cluster on old ships, or any old wood, are really the young of the barnacle goose—a faith by no means confined to the Isles. Even in France this legend of a marine birth has led to this goose being eaten on fast days, though so *foul* a fish has met with some opposition from ecclesiastical authorities. So late as the twelfth century, we find a great Welsh divine<sup>1</sup> warning the priests of Ireland against such Lenten fare. For though he himself evidently fully believes the fable, he declares that fowl born of fish is no more fit food for fast days, than might be “a leg of Adam,” who was not born of flesh either.

A trace of this curious discovery in natural history, is retained in the scientific name which describes the ship barnacle as the *Anatifa*, or goose-bearer. The account of its transformation into a great winged fowl is given most circumstantially by divers old writers, together with minute illustrations of the creature in its various stages. Thus Gerard writes, in 1636: “What our eyes have seen and hands have touched we shall declare.” And he goes on to tell how, on various old timbers cast up by the sea, is found “a certaine froth, which in time breedeth into certaine shells, whence commeth the shape and form of a bird. When it is perfectly formed, the shell gapeth open, and the first thing that appeareth is the aforesaid lace or string; next come the legs of the bird

<sup>1</sup> Giraldus Cambrensis, Archdeacon of St. David's, born 1146.

hanging out, and as it groweth greater, it openeth the shell by degrees, till at length it is all come forth, and hangeth only by the bill. In short space after, it cometh to full maturitie, and falleth into the sea, where it gathereth feathers and groweth to a fowle."

Various other learned ornithologists have left us the most minute description of the gradual development of this long-legged shell fish, and the growth of its feathers, till it becometh a fowl bigger than a mallard. Even Southey speaks of "The barnacle, a bird breeding upon old ships." Not content with this simple transition from fish to fowl, divers of our most learned forefathers taught (and the vulgar, of course, believed) that the barnacles themselves were indeed the blossoms of the old wood on which they were found clustering so abundantly.

One renowned scholar<sup>1</sup> says: "We find trees in Scotland which produce a fruit enveloped in leaves, and when it drops into the water at a suitable time, it takes life, and is turned into a live bird, which they call a *tree-bird*!" Of this curious tree he gives a faithful picture, with leaves and blossoms, and half-ripe fruit, whence issues forth the head of the young duck, while fully-developed birds swim in the pool below.

Another celebrated ornithologist<sup>2</sup> favours us with a yet more elaborate picture of the duck-bearing tree, whereon each fruit is a carefully-drawn barnacle, whence newly-hatched ducks fall into the water, and there joyously disport themselves. When such strange fables were gravely discussed by the naturalists of the day, we need scarcely wonder to find traces of the same folly among the ignorant fishers. As to the loose reasoning which admitted this goose to the rank of Lenten fare, it became weaker still in the case of the otter, which was also eaten on the lesser fast days, its flesh being so fishy as to allow room for the quibble.

A quaint trace of the old Celtic belief in some forms of transmigration, long lingered in some of these isles, where it was fully believed that those who were drowned assumed the form of seals, and disported themselves joyously in ocean depths, or else passed onward to "the realm beneath the waves"—a world with an atmo-

<sup>1</sup> Sebastian Munster on Cosmography.

<sup>2</sup> Aldrovandus.



sphere like our own, where Vikingr, and all brave pirates, sailors, and fisher-folk, dwelt in a beautiful world, in pearl and coral caves—a world over which the blue sea arched, as the blue heaven does above this earth; and it was only when a craving for old ocean, or for mother earth, came over these denizens of that mysterious land, that they needed to wear their seal-skin coats to enable them to return to the upper world.

Once a month they were allowed to lay aside their seal-skin raiment, and, resuming mortal form, might dance and sing all night upon the shore; but, ere the sun rose, they must resume their amphibious character, and plunge once more into the green waves. Strange legends were told of how venturesome mortals had found and stolen the seal-skins as they lay on the rocks, and had thus won back fair wives and friends from their marine bondage.

It is thus that the MacPhees of Isle Colonsay are descended from a drowned maiden, whose seal-skin the chief found one day upon a rock. When the weeping damsel came to search for her lost raiment, he shrouded her in his plaid, and rowed her ashore to his castle, when she became his wife. Sometimes, however, the brides thus captured found their seal-skins again among their lords' treasures, and, having tried them on, could not resist plunging once more into the sea, whence they never returned.

Another form of this myth tells how men and women were transformed into wild swans. Such is the story of the Children of Lir, told by Campbell of Islay, which records how an ill-woman worked spells whereby two brothers and a sister were condemned to assume this form, and haunt the Mull of Cantyre. There they sang plaintive Gaelic laments, but those who heard them said it was the cry of the wild swans.

At length they flew to an Irish lake, where a holy man had made his cell. The swans drew near, and took part in the service, and the saint espied gold chains around their necks, and knew that they were human beings bewitched. So St. Patrick himself was summoned to their aid, and the spell was broken, and the wild swans resumed their human form.

Akin to this story is one from Islay, which tells how a man saw

a flight of swans alight, and they cast off their feather robes, and became beautiful women. He stole a swan-skin (a *cochal*, as the disguise is called), and when the owner returned, she sought for it in vain, and her companions flew away, and she was left alone. So she wedded the mortal, and became the mother of many children. After some years, the bairns found an old swan's skin hidden in an out-house, and showed it to their mother. She wept bitterly, but she put on the skin, and stretched the white wings and flew far away from her wondering little ones.

But when many days had gone by, a flight of wild swans came to the house, bearing a swan's skin for the father, and he too was transformed into a white swan and flew away. Centuries elapsed, and then once more he returned to Islay, but it seemed to him as though he had only been absent for a night.

The transformation myth has its place in the legend of Os-ian's birth, for by magic his mother had been changed into a hind, and when her son was born, her deer's instinct made her lick his brow, and so deer's hair grew on the child's temple. Then the woman-nature prevailed, and she ceased licking the child; so he grew up human, with only a hair-spot on his temple.

The existence of mermen and mermaids is a matter of implicit credence. There are men and women now living on our coasts who believe in these curious compounds as truly as did the Syrians and Phœnicians.

The story goes, that these maidens and men of the sea possess a magic belt, without which they cease to be amphibious. Any one finding this treasure could keep the owner captive on the dry land for so long as he should please. There is a family now living at Hilton of Cadboll, in the parish of Fern, Easter Ross, who claim descent from a merman, whose belt a human girl had stolen.

At Tarbert, in Easter Ross, lives another family, who believe that wind and tempest can never harm their boat; for their father, James Môr (who is still living to tell the tale), once found a mermaid's belt, and would on no account restore it to her till she promised that none of his family should ever be drowned—a promise which she has faithfully kept.

What with fantastic legends, and records of strange old customs, and the daily delight of exploring beautiful scenes,—to say nothing of the charm of a prolonged spell of blessed summer weather (some-what a rare boon beneath these often weeping skies), the days glided by far too quickly.

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SIXTE LASSIES.

We would fain have prolonged our cruise, but that tyrant of the age, the post, recalled us once more to Uig, where all was calm and peaceful as usual. There were the same picturesque lassies, whose one short "coatie" and bare legs were seen running along the wet shore, while head and shoulders were lost beneath the great creel, overflowing with such a pile of green grass, and pink clover, with large white hemlocks and daisies, as seemed only a huge nosegay, with a sickle stuck in the middle of it.

If you speak to one of these little foragers, a bright face will glance up from under a scarlet handkerchief—but she will not attempt to answer, for though the lassies, as well as the lads, are taught in English at the “schule,” and a few can read it pretty well, hardly one can translate a sentence, or understand the simplest remark ; and the girls, living in Gaelic homes, do not find that use for English which induces a few of their brothers to pick it up.<sup>1</sup>

These were our last days in the sunny bay ; and they recall pleasant memories of rowing and fishing—and of long beautiful evenings when oftentimes we wandered up to some green headland, thence looking across the calm sea to the distant isles, all wrapt in that deep peace which specially belongs to the gloaming—the hour

“ When sweet and slumb’rous melodies o’er land and water creep,  
As Nature sits with half-shut eyes, singing herself to sleep.”

Thence returning to the little lodge, we skirted fields of tall brown rye grass and sweet clover, the chosen home of the corn-crake, who, through all the dewy night, watches among the long grasses, guarding the nest where sleep her brood of quaint, black, long-legged little ones, and uttering her harsh, grating cry—a cry jarring to unfamiliar ears, but to others very dear through association with lovely summer nights and country homes.

<sup>1</sup> See page 141.

## CHAPTER XIII.

## OIL ON THE WATERS.

“ With a low silver-tongued monotony  
The little billows whisper as they fall ;  
Calm is the forehead of the outer sea,  
As though it would not reawake at all.

“ But yestermorn, like mountains earthquake-shaken,  
The waters swayed against the dawning light,  
And now they lie, like sorrows overtaken  
By weary sleep, that cannot wait for night.”

Grey Rain—Portree Harbour—Becalmed—Whistling for a Wind—Oil on the Waters—St. Kilda Puddings—Shetland Cods’ Livers—Oily Fish—Fishermen of many Lands—Wrecks averted by use of Oil—Mr. Shields at Peterhead—Application of Oil to Life-buoys—Wreck Register.

OCH hone ! Och hone ! to think that such a change could have passed o’er the spirit of our dream. Here we are once again in beautiful Loch Staffin. But can it be that this is indeed the fairy bay in which, so few days ago, we took such exceeding delight ? Now the pattering rain falls with dull plash on the sullen waves ; a heavy ground-swell rolls us to and fro, and the cold spray dashes over us ; the bitter wind whistles through the rigging, or blows in hollow gusts, echoing among the crags ; on every side the lowering sky is black with gathering storm ; the slippery, black rocks are flecked with salt sea-foam, and there is no beauty in the dripping sea-weed, or the wet sands, or the flapping sails of the fishers’ boats—with their rich brown changed to dirty black.

It is with infinite difficulty that we effect a landing (for business has brought us here, and must be attended to); but as to embarking again, it is simply impossible. So there is nothing for it but to spend the night ashore in the little inn. All night we hear the sullen moaning of the wind, and the waves beating heavily on the shingle; and when the cheerless dawn breaks

#### THE STORM.

over the cheerless land, nothing is visible through the colourless mist, save heaps of tangle and dank weed lying in dark masses along the shore. Nevertheless we must re-embark with all speed, for the skipper distrusts his anchorage, and wants to run for Portree. So we are off, and look up at the great basaltic rocks, all dim and grey, wondering what had made them so beautiful in our eyes.

Our question is answered by the sun himself, shining out suddenly through the mist, lighting up the grand old Storr—now right above us, and revealing a thousand beauties of form and colour. Still we pass along the same basaltic pillars, which at one spot are fairly bent over, as if by some vast pressure in their early life. By the time we reach Portree, the evening is clear and sunny. Next morning, when we would again set sail, we find ourselves becalmed.

each white plume is reflected ; the brightest spots on the broad plain of gleaming light.

This fine sea-loch divides itself into an inner and an outer harbour, perfectly land-locked. The former is still known to the older fishers as Loch Columbkille, being one of the spots specially dedicated to St. Columba, who was patron saint of half of Skye, and many neighbouring isles. The other half was the property of that St. Maelrubha to whom, as we have seen, were offered such strange sacrifices.<sup>1</sup> At the further end of the loch, close to the sheriff's house, is a small rocky islet, where a few fragments of building, and traces of old graves are all that now remain to mark the spot where once stood the oldest monastic building in Scotland ; so, at least, say certain of our wisest antiquarians.

Early and late we rowed about on those calm waters ; sometimes landing in some little creek, where the great rocks sheltered us from the burning sun, and the cool wavelets, rippling over white sand, whispered an irresistible invitation to bathe. Then, wandering along the shore, some heathery knoll would tempt us to linger amid its fragrant purple till the mellowing evening light called us back to our floating home.

At last we made sure of a gale, and determined to sail next morning. So at 3 a.m. I went off to the head of the bay to get a final sketch of the Storr ; and returned, of course, to find the breeze more sleepy than ever. Next day we determined we *would* get under weigh ; so we contrived to get to the mouth of the harbour, and there lay immovable till the men got into the boat, and, rowing with all their might, contrived to tug us back.

You see our sailors were above the common world-wide practice of whistling for the wind, as their brethren the fisher-folk do to this day in most real earnest.<sup>2</sup> Hugh Miller tells us how, often, when he has been sailing with the Cromarty fishermen in calm weather, he has watched them with faces anxiously turned in the direction whence they expect the breeze, and earnestly invoking the wind in a shrill, tremulous whistling. He says that one evening

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter VI.

<sup>2</sup> And as I have heard done by sundry Pacific Islanders.



when it was blowing hard, he commenced whistling a careless tune, whereupon one of the men instantly silenced him, saying, "Whist, whist, lad ! we hae mair nor eneugh wind already." He traces this superstition back to the old days of mythology, when each spirit of air or earth or water must be invoked in its own language and in its own manner.

He quotes another instance of this conciliatory dealing with the elements, when, in the case of a rising storm, one of the fishers used to be told off to sit astern, and continually move his hand to and fro over the waves, as though making mesmeric passes, to soothe the spirit of the storm.

Sometimes the fiery Highlanders opposed wrath to wrath ; and there is one angry tide always chafing and fretting off the coast of Mull, which is called the "Men of Lochaber," because, having occasion to cross over to Mull, the contrast of these waves with their quieter waters amazed and angered them to such a pitch that they drew their dirks and stabbed the waves !

The men of St. Kilda came far nearer to a practical dealing with the difficulty, when they discovered for themselves the efficacy of "pouring oil upon troubled waters," a piece of wisdom with which, in its metaphorical sense, we have all our lives been familiar, though we have hitherto been so slow to apply it to practical, everyday use, on stormy seas. (By the way, how strange it is that no one should yet have been able to trace to its source this proverbial saying. I have heard many persons confidently assert it to be a quotation from the Hebrew Scriptures !)

To St. Kilda apparently belongs the honour of having been the first British island to apply the discovery to daily life. It seems to have occurred to some reflecting islander that the oil, so abundantly bestowed on all sea-birds, might be somehow specially adapted to the requirements of the beautiful white-winged creatures to whom wind and wave are alike ministers of delight. So the thought of carrying sea-gull oil to sea took form, and the fishers made puddings of the fat of sea-fowls, and fastened them astern of their "cobles" to hinder the waves from breaking.

Away to the north-east, their neighbours in the Shetland Isles

likewise found means to apply the lesson they had learnt from noting the smooth surface of the water, which invariably betrays the spot where a seal chances to be feasting, and they had remarked that the sea was most glassy when the victim was a specially oil-yielding fish, such as cod or ling. So familiar is this effect, that the Shetlanders have a special and singularly descriptive word to express it, namely, "liōm." If you have ever noticed the appearance of the sea in a dead calm, you will at once perceive how the very sound of this word suggests the oil-like smoothness of surface.

The hardy Shetland men are a race of bold fishers, and seek their harvest far away in the deep sea, sometimes rowing forty or fifty miles ere they reach their fishing-ground, in boats so small and light that a good haul soon overweights them. Yet in these they face the fiercest storms and most treacherous currents. The worst dangers await them as they near home, for there are certain points where the currents meet, and headlands, off which the sea is always tempestuous, while, in the straits between the islands, the tide rushes in an impetuous flood, more like a raging river than like a well-regulated ebb and flow. However calm may be the outer sea, these headlong sea-rivers are always tumultuous, breaking in crested billows, and marking their course by a pathway of foam extending far out to sea.

Even in calm weather it is rarely considered safe to cross these currents at high tide, and the experienced fishers lie off till it slackens. But when, homeward bound, and heavily laden, they encounter foul weather, and are compelled to face these furious tideways, then, in truth, they have to encounter such peril as tests the coolest heads and most iron nerves. And then it is (but only when driven to the last extremity) that they put in practice the seal's method of producing the "liōm," and purchase their safety by sacrificing part of their hardly-earned cargo. Cutting open their fish (chiefly cod and ling), they tear out the livers, and, crushing them in their hands to free the oil, they throw them overboard on every side.

Immediately, as if by a miracle, the mad raging of the waters is allayed. In one moment, a film of oil overspreads the surface, and

though the great waves still heave and roll, they are spell-bound, and cannot break, and the little boat, which but a few seconds before was in imminent danger of being swamped, now rides securely on the smooth green billows, which from that moment have become powerless to work mischief.

We need not go far for instances of the rough-and-ready application of fish-oil in its crude form. Mr. Anderson, writing from Edinburgh, tells how, some years ago, a number of fishermen in his employment were caught in a storm thirty miles east of the Isle of May, in the Firth of Forth. As their only hope of salvation, they had to cut open the skate, ling, and cod, mince up the livers, and cast them all round the boats.

Almost instantaneously they found themselves floating in gentle rolling waves, though on every side of them the crested billows continued to break furiously. The oil was not quickly dissipated, but floated in a compact body, and in this smooth water the boats, so lately in dire peril, lay for ten hours, till the tempest subsided, and they were enabled to return to port.

Fishermen take note of how the sea falls to a gentle roll when they are hauling up their well-filled herring nets, though it had previously appeared ready to engulf them. Thus at Fraserburgh, where there is a constant influx of boats laden with herring, the large amount of bilge-water from the boats calms down the sea to a gentle roll, and allows of the boats entering the harbour with the greatest safety, though the waves are breaking over the pier.

On our own northern coast, the herring fishers say they can tell at a distance where the shoals of oily fish are lying, by the smoothness of the water over them. The Cornish fishers can likewise detect the position of the pilchards. In the same way those engaged in the seal fisheries know where their victims are eating their oily prey below the water, by the unruffled surface above them. So, also, the track of a wounded whale or porpoise is clearly defined by the escape of oil, and it has often been observed that the body of a dead whale always floats in calm water—however rough the sea all round may be, no breakers can form near that natural oil-vat.

In the Highlands (where the excitement of leistering salmon by

torchlight on a dark night is a sport not altogether unknown, even in these days of salmon commissioners, and watchers, and water-bailiffs) we are well aware of the use often made by poachers (and other folk besides) of a good flask of oil, wherewith to smooth the surface of the deep brown pool where the silvery salmon lie all unconscious of the impending spear. Often the oil is mixed with sand, and thus thrown far up-stream to calm the ripples.

Just in the same way is oil used by the fishers of Bermuda, and by the men of Corsica and Syria. The boatmen of the Persian Gulf habitually carry bladders filled with oil, and in rough weather tow them astern of their frail craft, having first pricked them so as to cause a moderate leakage as they run through the waves.

The oyster fishers of Gibraltar always carry a flask of oil to still the motion of the sea, and enable them better to discern the largest oysters. So too do the men of Samoa, and other Pacific Islanders, carry gourds, or large nuts, filled with cocoa-nut oil, to aid them in spearing fish on the coral reef.

Strange, is it not, that a phenomenon so widely known should through so many ages have been turned to so little practical account ! How many centuries have elapsed since Pliny recorded how "all seas are made calme and still with oyle, and therefore the dyvers do spurt it abroad with their mouths into the water, because it dulceth the unpleasant nature thereof, and carryeth a light with it." At the present day the divers of the Mediterranean actually do spurt oil in the way Pliny described, in order to clear the light under the surface of the water by the stillness so caused.

Year by year has passed by, each season swelling the multitude of unnumbered dead who have perished within sight of land, because no boat could live in the white sea of breaking billows, and yet until quite recently no steps have been taken to bring into systematic use this most unobtrusive, but most valuable, ally of all whose life-work involves hard struggles with stormy waves and tempests. Indeed, so entirely has the subject been treated as a vain dream, that any person venturing to bring the topic forward as one worthy the attention of practical men, has generally been listened to with

the polite incredulity usually bestowed on stories of the great sea-serpent.

And yet there were not lacking proofs enough and to spare. Again and again have vessels engaged in collecting palm-oil on the African coast, or Ceylon, or the Pacific Isles, and still more frequently, whaling ships laden with whale-oil and blubber, reported the strange calm which always seemed to surround them, owing to the leakage of oil pumped up with the bilge-water, whereas the ships lying near them, carrying dry cargo, are tossing and pitching on a white-crested sea. So fully is this fact recognized, that a multitude of vessels employed on the whale fisheries are so old and rotten that they could not be sent on other service, but the nature of their cargo is their safeguard.

From Newfoundland and Labrador we have heard how such vessels, when riding out fierce gales, have saved themselves by throwing overboard small quantities of blubber; and many cases are on record of vessels having been well-nigh wrecked—the breakers pouring over them till they seemed on the point of foundering—when happily the oil-casks have broken adrift and been smashed. So instantly have their contents overcome the mad waters, that the raging waves could no longer break over the ship, though they heaved and tossed as tumultuously as before. They seemed spell-bound, and could not succeed in forming crests. And so the men have been enabled to work the pumps, and of course the oil from the broken casks in the hold kept up the supply—effectually preventing the waves from breaking. Thus the vessels have actually been enabled to ride out the storm, and eventually reach their desired haven.

All on board have known that the preservation of the ships, and of their own lives, was due to the action of that precious oil, yet, year after year, thousands of vessels start to face the dangers of the deep, and never think of shipping a few extra casks of oil in case of need. This may be partly due to the notion that a very large quantity would be required; but, in truth, a most marked point of the seeming miracle is the exceedingly small amount which produces such amazing results. So extraordinary is the

fluidity of oil, that *one drop* falling on water will instantly form a film of about *four feet in circumference*. It has now been proved, in dozens of cases, and on the sworn evidence of ship-masters, that vessel after vessel of heavy tonnage has been saved by the use of a couple of oil bags, no bigger than a man's hat, hung over the side of the ship, and allowed slowly to drip during several hours, till the fury of the gale was spent.

The subject of thus "smoothing the waters" was brought very forcibly to my mind when, crossing the Yellow Sea in a small brig, we came in for some rough weather; and though we had no occasion actually to test the matter, our good Danish captain was ready to do so, had the gale increased. He told me he had frequently carried a long wicker basket astern, containing oil-bags, so contrived that, by their gentle dripping, a constant supply should be kept up. The result was admirable. Not one wave broke over the ship. The expenditure of oil was a trifle not worth a moment's consideration, compared with the damage which would certainly have been done had even one white-crested breaker been permitted to form, as any one must realize who has once experienced the awful crash when a huge curling wave strikes a shivering ship—the weight of falling water crushing boats and bulwarks, and sweeping the decks.

Another of my nautical friends, Captain Champion (under whose good care I have visited many a beautiful spot in the Fijian Archipelago), had also tested this magic power of oil in allaying the tumult of the waters. On one occasion, when off the coast of New South Wales, he encountered a hurricane so severe that he believes his schooner would undoubtedly have been swamped, had he not had recourse to oil-bags, which smoothed the crested waves in a manner that seemed miraculous. He made five small canvas bags, each to contain three pints of fish-oil. To each of these he attached a cord of about a dozen fathoms in length, and threw them overboard from different parts of the ship, fore and aft. The leakage from these bags spread an oily film over the surface of the ocean all round the ship, and lasted for two days and nights. Beyond the charmed circle the white-crested waves were dashing madly, but so

soon as they approached within the magic influence of the oil, each wave ceased to curl, and rolled by in great glassy undulations. From the moment the bags were hung out, not another wave broke over the schooner, which during those two days rode in comparatively smooth water.

Instances, almost without number, can be brought forward of vessels which have undoubtedly been saved from destruction by means of this most simple and blessed safeguard, but in every case it is recorded as though some strange thing had happened to them, instead of being the natural result of a certain cause.

A very striking example was recorded in the year 1846, when the schooner *Arno*, commanded by Captain Higgins, was caught in a heavy gale off Sable Island. She had been engaged in the fisheries off the Quero Bank when the storm commenced. For some hours she rode at her anchor through a tremendous gale, but as the danger of foundering seemed imminent, the captain deemed it wiser to run her on shore than to face the almost certainty of foundering in deep water during the night. Lashing himself to the helm, he bade his men fill two large casks with fish-oil and blubber, and lash the casks near the fore-shrouds, and lash the two best men to the casks. He then bade all go below, while these two, armed with long wooden ladles, scooped up the blubber and oil, and threw it as high as they could in the air, that the wind might carry it before them.

The wind carried the oil far to leeward, scattered it over the water, and made a broad shining strip of smooth water,—billowy indeed, but quite glassy,—and over this the schooner flew, never shipping a sea. On either side the white crests were pitching and breaking, but the little vessel glided securely over her charmed pathway, and not a barrel of water fell on her deck, till she ran right on to the sandy beach, and the crew, with their clothing and provisions, were safely landed ere the vessel went to pieces. She was so old and rotten that she would probably have broken up long before, had not her constantly renewed cargo of blubber kept her always floating in comparatively smooth waters.

Another striking illustration of the use of oil as a safeguard in

tempest was furnished by the evidence of Captain Betts, of the *King Cenric*, running coal from Liverpool to Bombay. He encountered a furious gale, which raged continuously for nearly five days. Tremendous seas poured over the quarter and stern of the vessel, which was in imminent risk, when happily the chief officer, Mr. Bowyer, bethought him of an expedient which he had seen successfully resorted to on various occasions in Atlantic storms.

He got out two canvas clothes-bags, and into each poured two gallons of pine-oil. He punctured the bags slightly, and flung one over each quarter, towing them along. The effect was magical. The waves no longer broke against the poop and sides of the ship, but at a distance of many yards.

Around the poop, in the wake of the vessel, was a large circuit of calm water, where the oil had overspread the surface. The crew were thus able to repair damages, the ship being relieved from those tremendous shocks received from the mass of waters which had previously poured over the vessel, and the danger was considerably lessened.

The two bags lasted two days, after which, the worst fury of the gale having expended itself, it was unnecessary to renew the supply. Four gallons of oil, scarcely worth 30s. perhaps, saved the *King Cenric*, its cargo, and the lives and property of its crew.

In the New York shipping list for 1867 the evidence of an experienced skipper is given, to the effect that on two occasions he had saved his ship by the timely use of oil. As the result of his own experience, he recommended that every large vessel should be fitted with a couple of iron tanks, one on each side, each to contain forty gallons of oil, which might readily be drawn off into small casks, as required. He also strongly advocated that every boat should be furnished with a five-gallon oil-tank, to be kept always full, in case of need.

To the natural objection that such a well-filled oil-tank would add a considerable item of dead weight to a boat, the answer is obvious, namely, that the labour and danger of battling with the waves would be so enormously lessened, that the mere weight would appear a comparatively trifling drawback. Moreover, any accidental



leakage of oil would tend to keep the boats water-tight at all times.

Some men carry oil-bladders merely pricked with a needle, and suspended from the sides of the ship, so as to drip slowly. They consider that several small bladders answer better than only one of larger size.

Captain Atkinson, of the ship *British Peer*, states that he carries leather bags punctured with small holes, and in stormy weather he fills them with oil, and hangs them astern of the vessel. He says it is marvellous to see the angry billows subside, and ride under the oily track which lies in her wake. He attributes the safety of his vessel in several perilous gales to the use of this simple precaution.

Very noteworthy, too, is the case of a small sailing-boat, the *Leone di Caprera*, in which two rash Italians last year crossed the Atlantic from Buenos Ayres to the Mediterranean. They had had the forethought to lay in as much oil as their tiny craft would carry, and this they used freely each time that the waves were dangerously high, with the happy result of reaching their destination in safety.

Again, look at the case of the screw-steamer *Diamond*, of Dundee, which was wrecked off the island of Anholt. Though the crew did not really believe it possible that their frail boats *could* live in such a raging sea, still, as it was their only hope, they resolved to forsake the steamer. Each boat was provided with a five gallon can of oil, and from the moment each was lowered, one man was told off to pour it very slowly over the stern. The effect was instantaneous ; each boat passed safely through the awful breakers, and actually reached the shore without taking in so much as a bucketful of sea water !

Within the last few months, since some measure of public interest has been aroused in the subject, a considerable number of cases have been recorded, in which the safety of vessels has undoubtedly been due to the timely use of this simple safeguard.

A very noteworthy case is that of the screw-steamer *North Cambria*, of Newcastle, which reached Liverpool from New York in

March 1883, after passing through one of the worst gales which in this terrible year of storms has visited the wide Atlantic. The case is thus reported in 'The Newcastle Chronicle.'

"The s.s. *North Cambria*, which is a comparatively new steamer of strong build, sailed from New York on February 22nd, and on March 1st fell in with a terrific gale, which so increased on the following day, that the steamer received considerable damage through the huge mountains of water breaking with crushing force on the decks.

"Such was the state of the weather in the afternoon of the 2nd inst., when Captain Evans resolved to 'pour oil on the troubled waters.' This he did with wondrous effect. The waves, so to speak, were at once quelled, and prevented from breaking on board with their previous destructive force, and the crew were enabled to go about the deck without apprehension of danger, and repair the havoc made by the seas.

"As mentioned in the log, in the first emergency, the oil was poured over the ship's side, and so marvellous was the effect, that the sailors' bags, to the number of eight, were then put over on the weather side, until new canvas bags were made. These were filled with oil, and kept in use, to the saving of the steamer, until the gale abated on the following morning about one o'clock, and to this timely application of an old saying is due the safety of the *North Cambria*, her crew, and valuable cargo.

"It may be mentioned that this is not the first occasion on which Captain Wm. Evans has proved the value of oil in preserving a vessel in a gale. In the winter of 1877 he was master of the barque *Gateshead*, and while bringing the first cargo of Indian corn direct from New York to the Tyne, he encountered a tremendous gale, during which the ship was pooped by a heavy sea, which swept the decks fore and aft, smashing the wheel, and washing the man overboard, besides doing other considerable damage. In that emergency Captain Evans poured oil over the bow, and immediately the sea was so calmed that he was enabled to heave the ship to in safety.

"It may be mentioned that the above statements are verified by Mr. Short, chief engineer of the *North Cambria*, and Mr. Farina, inspecting engineer.

"The following is an extract from the log of the *North Cambria*:—'March 1st, 1883, 9 a.m.—An increasing wind and sea, with every appearance of a severe gale. March 2nd.—The safety of the ship became so seriously endangered that we tried to break the force of the seas by pouring oil over the ship's side, which immediately produced a wonderful effect on the sea, preventing it from breaking with force on the ship, so that we were able to go about the decks to secure the hatchings and tarpaulings. 4 to 8 p.m.—The hurricane still raging, and gradually veering to the westward, with threatening, confused sea. Continued to use oil, putting it into bags, which were put over the side.

The oil bags proved a wonderful protection. Midnight.—Fast moderating, with every appearance of fine weather, and much less sea.

“ ‘ March 3rd, 1 a.m.—Kept the ship to her course at full speed ; every prospect of fine weather, the sea going down fast. Took the oil bags on board, having used forty gallons of paint oil, and fifty gallons of engine oil, and thirty yards of canvas for bags, and fifty fathoms of rattling line to tow them with. The oil poured on the sea at first, and afterwards used in the canvas bags, in our opinion, saved the ship from destruction. On further examination, found signs of severe straining about the decks.’ ”

The ‘ St. James’ Gazette,’ May 10th, 1883, quotes letters from H.M.S. *Swiftsure*, telling of a terrific gale on the 6th April, when heavy seas broke over her, and as an experiment, a bag containing oil was rigged out over the weather side, with such marked effect on the waves, that the vessel rode bravely through the gale.

From Melbourne come details of the wreck of the steamer *Balgaim* on October 11th, 1882. “ An attempt was made to land the passengers and crew by means of a ladder run out from the ship to the edge of the rocks, but the continual wash of sea prevented this, until one of the engineers poured a large quantity of oil on the water, which had the effect of at once making the sea smooth. The passengers and crew were then safely landed.”

I will only quote one other case, which occurred off Tynemouth last December. A wild easterly gale was blowing with great violence, and the sea at the mouth of the Tyne was one wild wide expanse of boiling surf.

The *East Anglian*, steamer, from Yarmouth, in charge of Captain Beecher, made the entrance when the gale was at its worst, and when great danger attended any vessel passing the bar. The master reports that he resolved to try the effect of oil upon the waves, and stationed two men, each with a two-gallon bottle of oil, at the vessel’s bows, one on either side. The oil was gently poured upon the “ broken ” water, and the effect was that it became comparatively smooth at once, and the vessel passed into the harbour with little difficulty. The oil used was that usually burnt in the ship’s lamps, and only four or five gallons were poured upon the sea.

It has been stated that oil is not always efficacious in quelling

the short, jagged waves, which form what is called a "chopping sea." This, however, does not appear to be proven. There is also some diversity in the evidence as to the power possessed by oil in overspreading the surface of the water in the teeth of the wind. The whalers appear to have decided that the surest solution of the question is to keep their whales to windward, so as to insure calm water while they are being cut up and shorn of their blubber. Ordinary cargo is generally discharged, or shipped, to leeward.

Of course if oil cannot spread to windward, its efficacy must be considerably diminished. Some very simple mechanical appliance might, however, be devised, with a force-pump and jet, whereby the oil might be mixed with sand and thrown from the boat or vessel, so as to sprinkle the water at a distance of a few feet ahead, thus gaining a considerable advantage.

We have seen how, in such a case as that of the Shetland fishers, a well-laden fishing-boat carries her best protection in her cargo. As, however, she may chance to fall in with foul weather, and empty nets, it is obviously more secure for every boat invariably to carry two or three gallons of coarse oil ready for use in any emergency. The dark oil extracted from the livers of various fish is probably the cheapest, costing from 1s. 9d. to 2s. per gallon. Indeed, this can be made by the fishers themselves, from the refuse thrown aside in cleaning their fish.

A boat thus provided can smooth a path for herself across the stormiest bar, at the most dangerous harbour-mouth.

As one clear fact outweighs many vague statements, I will quote the case of the Stonehaven boats, which were caught in a very severe gale on the 13th of April, 1882. The first to return experienced the utmost difficulty in crossing the bar, and as the storm increased, and the waves waxed more and more tumultuous, the gravest fears were entertained for the boat *Pioneer*, which was still missing. Happily, her skipper, Alexander Christie, bethought him of the experiments recently tried at Peterhead, and though he had no oil on board save a little colza, and a little paraffin, for the boat's lamps, he determined to try whether so small a quantity could be

of any use. There was so little of it that it really seemed childish to suppose that so infinitesimal a remedy could avail. Nevertheless, he stationed a man on either bow, and just as they approached the awful wall of raging surf, they slowly poured out the contents of their oil-flasks. The result was magical. The white waters were driven back, and the boat glided into harbour over great billows of glassy green.

There were some who, on hearing of this case, refused at first to give it credit, till it was proved beyond all question. Yet this is simply the course adopted by the fishermen of Lisbon whenever they find the surf on the bar of the Tagus unusually rough. They empty a flask of oil on the sea, well knowing, from long experience, that the white-crested breakers will thereby be transformed to great green rollers, over which they can glide in safety.

But though this has been well known for many years, no one ever took that hint as the embryo of some grand scheme for overcoming the horrors of landing in the surf at Madras, or at many another port where traffic is endangered by the fierceness of the breakers.

No one ever tried to apply it to the dangerous bars at the mouths of several of our own large rivers, where we have had to mourn such pitiful wrecks of fine vessels, literally dashed to pieces by the mad surf breaking on the bar.

The only systematic application of this branch of the oil question which has yet been attempted, is that made by Mr. Shields of Perth, at Peterhead in Aberdeenshire, a spot selected as being the most exposed to every gale that sweeps the eastern shores of Scotland, and one, moreover, where a dangerous bar makes the entrance to the harbour a matter of exceeding difficulty and risk in stormy weather.

Mr. Shields determined to try a series of experiments to prove in what manner oil might most certainly be made available, to enable ships and boats to enter this and other harbours at all seasons.

His tests have been made on a very large scale. He carried 1200 feet of lead and iron piping from the shore to some distance beyond the mouth of the harbour, where they terminated in deep

water. In a shed on the beach stands a 100-gallon cask of oil ; a force-pump carries the oil through the pipe, and ejects it through three conical valves at the further end. Thence it rises to the surface, and straightway forms a thin film, which overspreads the tempestuous waters above the bar. Straightway the white crests, which are the source of so much danger, disappear, and though the strong tide still sweeps inwards in huge swelling billows, they are shorn of their terror, and become smooth rollers, on which any vessel or boat may ride safely into the haven.<sup>1</sup>

Of course, the chief objection to this plan is the very large amount of oil which must be expended every time that a ship or boat approaches in stormy weather, and which would certainly result in making the harbour authorities chary of its use, except in cases of extreme danger. It is therefore very desirable that, in addition to the harbour apparatus, means should be devised for applying the remedy to each several ship at the moment of need. It has been suggested that oil-canisters might be attached to rockets, or shells containing oil might be fired from mortars, so as to discharge their contents on the water close to the ship in distress, or at the moment she is about to cross the bar. Surely the ingenuity which devises such intricate mechanism for destructive shells and infernal machines might contrive some method by which the oil-shell might be safely despatched on its errand of mercy.

Still more practical does it appear, that every vessel should, as a matter of course, carry her own oil-supply, with which to make a smooth pathway for herself in the hour of danger, which may meet her at many a point besides the harbour mouth.

Another most desirable application of oil would be *to attach two copper pipes containing oil round every life-buoy*—one on the inner, the other on the outer edge—closed by a cork attached to the string by which the buoy is hung up. A printed notice should be

<sup>1</sup> It is satisfactory to learn that, by order of the Board of Trade, further experiments were made with Mr. Shield's oil apparatus in Aberdeen harbour, during a wild March storm, when the sea, both within and without the harbour, was one wild expanse of broken waves. The official report states that the use of oil is no longer an idea, but a reality which, scientifically applied, will lead to great and beneficial results.

appended, *bidding the person who throws it overboard, jerk the string, and so pull out the cork.*<sup>1</sup>

Every one who has been much at sea must have been struck with the small chance that a drowning man has of even *seeing* the buoy flung to him, as he and it rise and fall amid the mountainous waves. But *this simple addition would at once create a large space of glassy water, visible for perhaps a mile, in which, moreover, he could float securely,* till the vessel, probably running before the wind, was able to lower her boat and send him succour. At present, we all know *how rarely such seekers are able even to find their life-buoy.*

If the vessel is running before a stiff breeze, the life-buoy and the swimmer are left far behind ere she can be stayed and a boat lowered, and it is hard indeed to mark the exact spot on that wearily monotonous waste of ever-heaving, foam-flecked waters where the search must begin.

*With oil thus applied, and life-buoys made luminous,* one great danger in a sailor's hard life would be very greatly lessened.

Furthermore, it might be so contrived that the man at the wheel could reach a handle, by which to open a valve or elbow in an oil-tank in the stern of the ship. In the event of a person falling overboard, the drip of oil thus produced would instantly form a smooth track, and *enable a boat to go straight back to the rescue of the drowning man.*

So, too, the life-boat, fitted with a self-acting oil-tank, would find her approach to a ship in distress vastly facilitated, were the breaking of the crested waves hindered for even a little while.

This has been a very long digression from the puddings of sea-gull fat, so judiciously applied by the islanders of St. Kilda. But in truth the subject is one which, to me, as an old sailor in many seas, possesses a special interest,—an interest nowise lessened as I look at last year's terrible Register of Wrecks, knowing that, beyond all doubt, some at least of these, and assuredly many a precious life, might have been saved by timely use of this most simple remedy.

In truth, its extreme simplicity seems to be the stumbling-block

<sup>1</sup> This suggestion has been practically exemplified by Mr. Bowman of Huntly, Aberdeenshire, whose various oil-buoys are exhibited in the "International Fisheries."

in the way of its use. Like the old Scriptural story of the Leper General who scorned the Prophet's prescription, which only bade him bathe thrice in the Jordan, instead of requiring some great thing, so is this sprinkling of a little oil on the mighty waves. It seems altogether too simple to be worth even trying. And yet the fact of this mysterious power remains unchanged.

In that sad Wreck-Calendar I find that between June 1881 and June 1882, no less than 1303 British vessels are reported as lost (besides 1622 which were seriously injured—and such injuries occur most frequently by the breaking over the ship of big seas).

Of these wrecks, 208 are reported "missing" (the most awful of all records, as it implies the total loss of all on board), 228 are attributed to gales, 12 to heavy seas.

These are just some of the cases in which oil might have lessened or averted danger.

The year's record of lost lives is 3978 (1055 more than in the previous twelve months); of these 2245 were on board the vessels reported "missing." No wonder that the President of the Board of Trade is compelled to state that, notwithstanding all recent legislation for the good of our sailors, marine casualties are as numerous and as fatal as ever.

And all the time this most gentle of all mighty agencies has been almost totally ignored, or, even where it has been used, and has successfully performed its magic task, its benefits have in general received but a grudging recognition.

If, therefore, these few notes on its use serve to bring the subject more clearly to the mind of any whose business lies in the great waters, I shall console myself with the hope that this digression has not been altogether in vain.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 'Oiling the Waves: a Safeguard in Tempest.' In April 1882 I contributed a paper of the above title to 'The Nineteenth Century,' containing many quotations from the evidence of seamen on this subject. I am much gratified to learn that the paper has been reprinted first in the Sandwich Isles; then in pamphlet form (with additional evidence of the value of oil on broken waves) by a Sailors' Institute in New Zealand; and thirdly by Bishop Stanton, for free circulation in his diocese of North Queensland, where so many "barred rivers" endanger navigation.



## CHAPTER XIV.

## FAREWELL TO THE ISLES.

Three Weeks alone in the Rock Wilderness—A Family of "*Haavelings*"—Yachtsmen—Sligachan Inn—The Cuchullins—Divers Tourists—Loch Corruisk—A Good Day's Deer Stalking—Old Boar Hunt—A Whale Ashore—" *Blocs Perchés* "—Giant Fossils on Isle of Eigg—Legends of Clan Fights—The Grave of a Viking's Daughter—Old Churchyards of Snizort, Nigg, &c.—Of Funeral Feasts—The Skye Railway foreseen by Local Seers—Drive *viâ* Balmacarra and Loch Alsh to Shiel House Inn—Eilean Donan Castle—Glen Quoich—Fort Augustus—Castle Urquhart.

HOWEVER valuable to the storm-tossed mariner may be the soothing influence of oil on the waters, we certainly needed none on our present cruise, for we watched the smooth, glassy, unrippled surface of the water till we despaired of ever getting out of harbour.

At last, however, the welcome breeze sprang up, and when the spirit of the wind did awaken, it did so in good earnest, and we straightway returned to Loch Staffin, where I had determined to have two or three weeks alone with the rock-spirits of Quiraing.

It was very dismal to watch my playfellows sail away in the evening, but I received a cordial welcome in the wee inn, though "inn" I should not call the kindly farmhouse where I found myself in the position of an honoured guest. My gentle landlord was most assiduous in his care, and being the only creature who could speak a word of English, used anxiously to come and interpret whatever information might be necessary, to the one fair spirit who

was my minister—namely, a strapping, cheery wench, Peggy Môr, who, though of course utterly guiltless of English, was wonderfully “gleg at the uptak.”<sup>1</sup> This was fortunate, as her master was generally absent all day. When my intelligent giantess succeeded in understanding my various signs she would pat and stroke me exultingly, uttering clicks and chuckles of exceeding interest and delight.

Mine host was, in some way, responsible for all the lunatics in the district, and being a man of a tender heart, could rarely resist the appeal of any who were particularly anxious to leave the asylum, and find occupation among his herdsmen. So it came to pass that various strange beings haunted the neighbourhood, *haavelings*, as we call half-witted creatures on the mainland. One in particular who herded the *kye* was engaged in a ceaseless warfare with devils, and was for ever battling with invisible foes, in order to protect himself and us. The raging waves were an especial annoyance to him, and he attributed their noise to myriads of women roaring in concert.

It used to amuse me in the evenings to hear all the farm lads and lasses gathered round the kitchen fire, “laughing and daffin’ and lilting and quaffing,” and after their simple supper of porridge and milk, singing all manner of Gaelic songs and choruses, which were just sufficiently softened by distance to lose their harshness; “low winding songs, with as little beginning or end as the murmur of a brook,” and well in keeping with the wild sea and mountains round me.

Each day that promised a tolerable allowance of sunshine I went up to the Rock Wilderness, getting a lift in “the cart,” which was full of sweet fresh straw, very needful, considering the character of the ground over which we jolted. But on the whole, the rain had the best of it, and though a waterproof rug and waterproof coat made *me* quite amphibious, my sketching blocks lived under shadow of an umbrella which, alas! was rapidly giving up the ghost. What was to be done?

The problem was solved by the return of mine host from a distant

<sup>1</sup> Quick at understanding.

cattle market, whence he brought me a fairin'—a roll of pale brown ribbon. It mattered not that the poor umbrella was dark maroon; we sewed strips of ribbon down each seam, and little patches of ribbon under every tear, and when our masterpiece was finished, it not only defied wind and rain, but was the admiration of all beholders—nay, more; it proved a fruitful topic of conversation, which is no mean praise in these parts!

Events were few and far between. In three weeks about three drowned tourists arrived from Portree *viâ* the Storr—pedestrians, of course—and one day, while I sat painting on the shore, a very large English yacht came in, with a steam-tug to take care of her. The owner having packed as many of his party as could find room, into “the cart,” went off to Quiraing. I was much amused at noting the difference between the English sailors who manned this yacht and those we had had to do with. The latter were grave thoughtful men, content with the simplest fare, biscuit, herrings, and milk, and appreciating the beauty of scenery as much as we did ourselves. These, like a pack of wild boys, were intent only on the fun of foraging, and capturing sheep, fowls, eggs, whatever they could lay hands on, and their verdict on each place where they had halted was solely dependent on the commissariat.

Then I began to realize how curiously this contrast must have struck the frugal old Highlanders, when first the Saxons came among them, and the grim humour that prompted their retort to some English taunt—a retort which became proverbial—“Show me a Southron, and I will show you a glutton!” Far be it from me to apply such a term to these jolly tars.

Nevertheless, not one of them gave a glance at the strange scene their master had come so far to look at, though they found considerable amusement in watching my sketch of it. Three months later, when I embarked for India at Southampton, a cheery voice wished me luck, and that I might get good drawings, and looking up, I recognized one of these hearties, who took a special interest in my comfort throughout the voyage.

When the time came that I must bid adieu to Quiraing, my friends at Uig, true to the good old precept, “Welcome the coming,

speed the parting, guest," escorted me as far as Portree. My next halting-point was Sligachan Inn, which stands on the borders of Lord Macdonald's deer forest of Sconser.

The drive from Portree to Sligachan was over a heathery moor, a broad expanse of rich browns and purples, with patches of vivid green, or dark moss with darker peat stacks ready cut for winter fuel. Here and there a broken sea-bank, and a rippling stream; and beyond, an ever-changing outline of fine mountain forms, just appearing through the mist, then vanishing again.

The inn, though small, is comfortable enough, and affords shelter to a wondrously varied multitude of tourists and travellers, members of the Alpine Club, distinguished artists, statesmen, ecclesiastics, botanists, geologists, yachting parties, pleasure-seekers of all sorts, drovers, excisemen, down to that class of tourist who "does" Skye as a sort of unpleasant duty, and confides to his friend "'ow hawfully the 'orses gibbed coming up these 'ideous, 'orrible 'ills," adding that if only Nature had "put all the 'ills into the 'ollows, it would have been a much finer country."<sup>1</sup> Also giving him startling information of all sorts, such as that "A gwilse is the female of a gwouse," and making, oh! such havoc of all local names.

One of these southern gentlemen, whose presence had only been remarked by his excessive silence, suddenly electrified his neighbours by springing wildly towards the window, exclaiming, "There they are! There they are! Don't you see the red-deer?" at the same time pointing out a couple of collie dogs which were quietly surveying the world from the brow of the hill. After this failure the unhappy man once more relapsed into silence, and made no further attempt to enliven the public.

But none of these conveyed to our ears so curious a sensation as when a pretty young woman, who had been listening in much bewilderment to a discussion about Oban, suddenly looked up, and with an expression of beaming intelligence, exclaimed, "Well, to be sure! Why, I thought you were talking of Oban in London!" Judge of our first feelings of mystification, and congratulate us on

<sup>1</sup> This remark *really* was made to my father! himself a devout worshipper of beautiful scenery.

our command of countenance, in that, as a vision of Holborn Hill slowly presented itself to our minds, we contrived not to move a muscle !<sup>1</sup>

But though we take our quiet laugh at the Sassenach, perhaps he, in his turn, may find his little joke at the expense of some of our northern worthies, and may treasure up such speeches as that of a certain drover, who, moved with indignation at finding himself supplied with a dessert-spoon at second-course, shouted to the damsel in waiting to bring back his soup-spoon, exclaiming, "Hoot ! lassie, isna ma mouth just as big for pudding as for kail ?"

Many a good story has been told under that roof, and many a queer long-winded discussion of every topic under heaven, overheard, with more or less amusement, by people who, accustomed always to go on trotting round and round their own social cabbage-leaf, here catch perhaps the only glimpse they ever get of the existence of their fellows, whose diverse caste has run them, likewise, into their several grooves. Here, however, for once, they do just meet, and bring with them enough of their own individuality to make them amusing studies for one another.

<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless she was probably nearer right than ourselves, inasmuch as Dean Stanley tells us that Holborn, like Hay Hill, owes its initiatory H to sheer Cockneyism ; the latter denoting the hill where the Aye Brook once flowed, while the former takes its name from the Old Bourne (the ancient river), which, rising in High Holborn, formerly ran down that green hillside. Its once clear waters, like those of all the neighbouring streamlets, have now been imprisoned and sentenced to hard labour underground, in purifying sewers.

The Dean also quotes the suggestive names of Langbourne (the long stream), Tyburn (The Aye Bourne), Mary-le-bone (from St. Mary le Bourne), Southborne, and Shareborne as reminders of the early days when these shares, or small rills, flowed through peaceful meadows ; and when ships came up to Old Bourne Bridge, pausing on their way at Fleet Bridge ; strange vision of a time when the *fleet*, or swift brook, flowed (a silent highway) where now the stream of busy life surges so noisily, with ceaseless roar.

Apart from this curious change in London's geography (above-ground at least), it is interesting to remember that our own Scotch name for a brook, a *burn*, has so near a relationship to old English—though I doubt whether many modern Britons ever think of a river, in connection with "the *bourne* whence no traveller returns."

And of all this, you get full benefit, as the little inn boasts of only one private sitting-room, and the occupant thereof is considered by the other inmates exclusive indeed. I for one, had been so long alone with the Rocks and the Peggy Môr, that I was not disposed to shun my species! Moreover, I was fortunate enough to fall in with thoroughly pleasant companions, who, arriving on the same day as myself, were likewise in no hurry to leave so beautiful a spot. So we formed ourselves into a most agreeable *coterie*, and found abundant pleasure, social and scenic, during the three happy weeks we spent beneath the shadow of the dark Cuchullins.<sup>1</sup>

Of those kindly companions, one, alas! may never more tread mountain crag. Ere two summers had passed, during which he had scaled many a cloud-capped summit, he met his fate suddenly, as he had always himself predicted. Wandering alone on the Maritime Alps, a falling mass of rock struck and killed him in a moment. Some peasants brought tidings to Mentone of the death of an unknown Englishman, and after a while it was known that this was our friend of the Cuchullins, and that yet another of the companions of these two short years had passed away from earth.

The inn stands on a flat peat moss, just where a brown trout-stream flows down Glen Sligachan into a salt sea-lake of the same name.<sup>2</sup> To the right of the valley towers the mass of dark peaks, eight of which are upwards of 3000 feet in height. Of these, Scur-na-Gillea, or the gillie's hill, claims precedence. It earned its name in remote ages from a legend that two lads had been killed while attempting to scale its dark crags, and till very recently its summit was deemed inaccessible. Even to the most experienced cragsman the ascent is no child's play, as has been recently but too well proven, when a member of the Alpine Club met his death alone among these cruel black rocks, his body being found next day at the foot of a precipice.

On the other side of the valley rises a ninth peak of similar height (Blabhein, pronounced Blaven), also of a greenish black

<sup>1</sup> "Cuchullin." Pronounce "Coolin."

<sup>2</sup> See illustration to Chapter IV.

hyperstenite rock, known to geologists as "Gabbro," its strangely serrated outline cutting hard against the sky, and its solemn gloom, like that of its dark kindred, generally intensified by the deep cloud shadows resting on its summit.

Against it, in strong relief, stands Marskow, one of a group of conical hills of red syenite and porphyry, whose steep sides are water-worn by the torrents (true children of the storm) that rush down literally from the clouds. These red hills seem like huge piles of disintegrated rock, pale flesh colour, more curious than beautiful, though a brilliant green herbage has managed to creep up the lower slopes, and glances with rainbow light when touched by that "clear shining after rain" with which dwellers in a hill country become so familiar. Their rounded forms (singularly free from any deep glens or defined crags) are in curious contrast with the deeply-furrowed ravines and corries which seam the dark massive pyramids of black rock that tower on either side of the valley.

Another of these pink hills bears the name of Glamaig, whose shoulder, Scur-na-Mairi, or the crag of Mary, was so called in memory of a woman who was there killed in attempting to rescue her cow.

At the head of the valley stands one cone whose name, Trodhu, recalls the days when the old Norsemen overran the land, and left traces of their presence all along the coast. Such names as Skeabost, Orbost, Kirkabost, Hushibost, Bornaskitag, Hungladder, Valtos, and many another seem to carry us north to Scandinavian shores.

For this cone of Trodhu you must make, if you wish to look down on the far-famed Loch Corruisk (literally "the Corrie of the water"). Three hours' good walking or pony-riding should take you up beautiful Glen Sligachan, and by a steep ascent to the shoulder of Trodhu, whence the view on a clear day is magnificent. Wild hills rise high on every side of you, their dark rocky crests half veiled by wreaths of floating mist. Far below you lies black Loch Duich, a small, intensely dark pool, often called the Dhu Lochan, *i. e.* the black Tarn.

It is connected by a streamlet with blacker Corruisk, whence a river, perhaps a quarter of a mile long, rushes down the rocks into Loch Scavaig, the most exquisitely transparent green sea-loch, on whose calm surface is mirrored a dazzlingly white waterfall, that comes tumbling over the crags. The contrast in colour between these lochs is most striking; the fresh water so sombre, like darkest indigo—the salt water, so wondrously green. On the latter float a few brown and red specks, veiled with the faintest thread of blue smoke, which tells that the fishers have kindled fires on board their boats, and are cooking their midday meal of fresh herrings. A little apart from these, flutters a tiny white sail no bigger than a fairy's wing, which proves to be a yacht just anchoring in the bay. And beyond Loch Scavaig lies the great blue sea, from which rise the shapely hills of Rum, and the lower shores of Canna and other isles.

Beautiful, however, as is such a day of glorious sunshine, when we feel the mere fact of existence to be bliss unspeakable, there is no denying that fine dry weather is certainly not the time to see these hills in their glory. We thought ourselves singularly fortunate in having selected a perfect day for our first visit to the corrie of the waters, little thinking how a few days of sunshine would inevitably have parched and scorched the rocks, and dried up every trickling stream and tiny waterfall. We started, having our minds thoroughly imbued with Scott's description of this scene, "so rude, so wild,—yet so sublime in barrenness"; where

. . . . .  
 " . . all is rock at random thrown,  
 Black waves, bare rocks, and banks of stone."

At the summit of the ridge below Trodhu we paused, breathless with delight at the glory of the panorama outspread before us. There, as is customary, we turned the ponies loose, an amount of trust which these wise creatures never betray. This done, we started for a long and fatiguing scramble down the steep hillside, fairly awed by our solemn expectations, which intensified as we neared the ridge whence we might overlook those black mysterious waters.







Once there! . . . . O bitter disappointment! This weird and wonderful scene, of whose barren grandeur we had read such descriptions in poetry and prose—and had seen such exaggerated pictures, beginning with Turner's far-famed drawing, where overhanging cliffs are shown overshadowing the black water; is *this* Corruisk? *This* the peerless loch whose stillness and solitude poets have sung, as though no other spot of earth could show such leaden-hued waters, embosomed in such a wilderness of rugged rock mountains, whose black pinnacles seem to pierce the heavens, towering far above the masses of floating clouds which for ever hang around their summits? We looked for such grim solemnity as should befit the chosen home of Spirit-Giants, and we beheld only a little dark tarn, with grassy shore, surrounded by hills—very steep certainly, but not very impressive, and all of much the same height, running in a slightly jagged line across a cloudless blue sky; while every detail of arid rock and every tuft of grass stood out clearly revealed in the calm sunshine. Not a wreath of friendly mist was there to lend mystery to the scene, but far up the valley a party of odious tourists were making the sad hills echo their vulgar shouts!

We stood mute with disappointment—and if we had not been too tired, I think we should have gone straight back to the brow of the hill. However, by degrees a few clouds stole up, and some hill-tops were partially veiled, and dark crags stood out in relief—and as the sun moved westward, long shadows from the great rocks fell athwart the weary land. The shouting snobs were gone, and nature's still small voice spoke for herself.

Then we began to realize what that scene might be, under dark effects of storm and thunder—at the outgoings of morning and evening—or in the clear starlight. So we determined to come back, and try a second impression. And the second led to a third; and the third to a fourth; and the oftener we went, the better we loved that wild ride through Glen Sligachan, and the dark valley where the deep, blue-black tarns gleam like black diamonds beside the emerald sea-loch. Often we halted, just to listen to the intensely solemn silence, broken only by faint whispers of the breeze that

just fanned the light mists in the corries, or the rippling murmur of the quiet brooklet, as it flashed here and there in the sunlight. And sometimes when a jarring human voice rang harshly in our ears, disturbing those perfect harmonies, we did feel—oh, such sympathy!—with the grand old Indians, who believed that the lonely stillness of their tranquil lakes was especially sacred to the Great Spirit, and that His wrath would sink the canoe of any rash mortal who dared to lift up his voice while on the waters.

Once in the days of the early settlers, a white woman had occasion to cross Lake Saratoga, and the Indians, ere they started, warned her of the danger that one rash word might bring. It was a calm, cloudless sky, and the canoe sped like an arrow athwart the smooth waters. Suddenly, when in the middle of the lake, the strong-minded woman determined to prove to these simple folk the folly of their belief. So, like the shouting snobs of Corruisk, she lifted up her voice in a wild cry that woke every echo of the hills. The Indians were filled with consternation. They uttered no word, but straining every nerve, rowed on in frowning silence. They reached the shore in safety, and the soul-less woman triumphed. But the Mohawk chief looked upon her with scorn. "The Great Spirit is merciful," he said. "He knows that the white woman cannot hold her peace!"

The apparent size of the corrie is strangely deceptive. It is almost impossible to make the eye realize that the loch can be a mile in length; and yet we know that it is nearly four, and that a grassy valley lies at the further end, where the black rocks seem to close in so precipitously. Well do the red deer know how to prize that oasis in the rock-wilderness—truly green pastures beside still waters. Yet not even here does "the antlered monarch of the waste" reign in peace. Once, at least, this little glen was the scene of as good a day's sport as ever fell to the lot of solitary stalker.<sup>1</sup>

It was before the days of cartridges and breechloaders, when men were liable to have their sport spoilt and their tempers ruffled by the failure of a damp cap. In the present instance, the irritating

<sup>1</sup> The late Lord Middleton.

cause was the lack of that small essential; for, after a long and tiring walk across the hills, the sportsman suddenly bethought him that he had forgotten to replenish his store. In vain were his pockets turned out, in hopes of finding hidden treasure in some corner. All his search only produced five caps; short allowance, you must confess, with which to start on a long day's stalking. However, he pushed on, and made for the head of Corruisk. Judge of his dismay when he beheld five stags quietly feeding by the stream that trickles through the green valley! All through the long day he stalked them, one by one; and at midnight returned home, with one cap in his pocket, having bagged the four fine heads, each with a single shot, while the fifth was so poor as not to be worth having. Next day the foresters went in search of their prizes, and found them in spots so inaccessible, that they had to cut them up where they lay, and bring them down piecemeal, as no pony could possibly carry such a burden on such ground.

But if the Corrie of the Waters has thus its tale to tell of the kingly red deer, Loch Scavaig has older legends of the days when its shores were haunted by fierce wild boars. On the edge of the loch there is a cave wherein the chief of the Mackinnons once found shelter when separated from his followers by the luck of the chase. He kindled a fire, and proceeded to cook some of his venison on the embers. In one hand he held a large bone, off which he was cutting slices ready for dressing, when a rustle on the dry sea-weed in the mouth of the cave made him look up to see a dark creature rushing at him with gaping jaws and wicked tusks. He recognized a savage wild boar, and, having no choice between absence of body and presence of mind, he made good use of the latter.

Holding the bone upright in his hand, he awaited the charge of the grizzly brute, and dashed his arm down its throat, the cross-bone, of course, holding the terrible jaws open, and leaving him full time to despatch the foe with his hunting-knife. To this feat the Mackinnons of the present day owe their crest, which is a boar's head, open-mouthed—apparently choked by a great bone.

This description of his cutting slices ready for dressing, points to a common manner of preparing food in those wild days by simply squeezing the meat between two flat stones, or two battens of wood till all the blood was forced out. Of course there were many cases when kindling a fire would have been inconvenient, and when its smoke would have betrayed the presence of one who sought concealment, whereas this told no tales, and involved no tedious process of kindling with flint and steel.

This story of Mackinnon's crest must remind Oxonians of the kindred legend telling how a student of Queen's College was wandering in Shotover Wood, and reading a volume of Aristotle, when a fierce wild boar charged him open-mouthed. The electrified student had no alternative but to thrust Aristotle down the boar's throat, which most effectually choked him ; in memory of which exploit, the boar's head, borne into hall with all due pomp, still graces the Christmas dinner at Queen's.

In recent times, Loch Scavaig rarely knows any excitement greater than a visit from a shoal of herrings, or an occasional yacht. Seven years ago, however, a great event occurred ! A whale, sixty feet long, swam unsuspectingly right up the loch, and there found himself so entangled and perplexed by the great black rocks, that he ran right ashore, and for two whole days wriggled and flopped about in the vain struggle to escape, lashing the sea and overturning huge stones in his despair, and all the time roaring (so say the fishers) like an enraged bull, awakening the ghostly echoes of dark Corruisk, and disturbing the Sabbath calm of its misty mountains.

Not till the third day did the poor brute cease to battle with his rocky prison, when he was espied by an amazed English tourist, who forthwith swam to the spot and climbed on to the whale's back, whence he was shaken off by its last dying struggle. Then the natives assembled, and having finally despatched him, set to work in a fever of excitement to carry off the blubber from this heaven-sent prize. Small indeed was the portion of this royal fish that was left for Her Majesty, but many a lowly home was gladdened through the winter nights by the unwonted supply of

oil, although so vast a quantity was suffered to escape, that the troubled sea all round was smoothed and calmed for many days. It was long enough after this dissection, before any one gifted with a sense of smell could again venture near that beautiful sea loch !

One very striking geological feature of this district is the prevalence of the class of rocks known to Alpine travellers as *roches moutonnées* and *blocs perchés*, that is to say, long swelling surfaces of bare, granulated rock, in form like the outline of a great stranded whale, whereon lie poised huge detached boulders of rock of totally different formation. These vast rounded slopes of gritty chocolate-coloured sandstone are almost always quite bare, even the kindly lichen failing to obtain a resting-place thereon.

All along the margin of the lakes, and indeed everywhere on the lower slopes of these hills, these rounded red masses appear, invariably lying in a transverse position to the general direction of the valley ; telling of a time, far hidden in the remotest mist of ages, when mighty glaciers lodged in every ravine of those dark mountain ranges, and thence slowly descended to the valleys with sure though imperceptible progress—grinding and smoothing the rugged rocks as they passed over them, and bearing on their cold ice-waves huge boulders of fallen rock, weighing perhaps fifty tons or more. Many such still lie in the valleys ; gigantic masses which, from their formation, must evidently have been carried hither from far-distant points. These boulders, of every size, from the least to the greatest, lie scattered in every glen, as though the giants of the mountain had been pelting their pigmy foes in the lower world.

Constantly we find these erratic blocks perched on the very edge of the rounded rock, as though the ice-wave had had no power to carry them further ; and so ever since, through the storms and hurricanes of centuries untold, they have remained there, poised, as if waiting for some new motive force to send them crashing down the hill.

Although the action of the glaciers has planed these swelling forms to such apparent smoothness, you need but step upon them

to find that they are in truth all grooved with continuous minute lines ; the result of which is, that so far from being slippery, they are in reality so rough to the foot as to afford a perfectly secure hold, and a most agreeable surface on which to walk. A few days after returning to the mainland, I heard the Archbishop of York make very striking reference to these glacial marks, as illustrating the gradual moulding of human character and the ineffaceable traces of daily life on the far distant future ; and straightway there rose before me a vision of Corruisk in antediluvian days !

Strange indeed are the pictures that suggest themselves when, from time to time, Mother Earth reveals to us hints of the marvellous geological changes through which, in her long life, she has had to pass. Phases of poverty and of wealth, of burning heat and bitter cold. Imagine days when British coal-fields were forests of waving palms and giant tree-ferns, rich and beautiful as a tropical jungle. Days, too, when these isles were peopled with such monstrous reptiles as those which haunt the dreams of our children, after a day at the Crystal Palace—creatures whose remains have been found even on yonder blue Isle of Eigg.

Not that the reptiles had it all to themselves. Gigantic elephants and kindred creatures roamed through the forests and there left their bones, which, after countless ages, have been dug up in the streets of London and of Oxford by puny bipeds, who little dreamt that they had built their cities on the very site of the great mammoth cemeteries.

Poor Mother Earth suggests far more sudden alternations of heat and cold in her northern regions, where not only are the perfectly-preserved carcasses of woolly elephants found embedded in the ice-cliffs, but huge buried forests, such as those in North Greenland, where now no shrub can brave the cold, but where, in the very heart of the glaciers, fir-trees, oaks, elms, laurels, plantains, and magnolias have been dug up—not their branches and trunks only, but even leaves and cones, all perfectly preserved. It seems as if Greenland and Siberia are now passing through the same course of treatment to which Britain was subjected so many ages ago ; possibly their shores may some day be considered as the temperate



zone, when our isles have attained some condition as yet undreamt of !

Sometimes we varied our route up Glen Sligachan by invading the Hart o' Corrie, a deep, dark gorge running into the very heart of the Cuchullins, which rise on every side in mighty crags—ash-coloured, seamed with a green mineral that is well-nigh black, and streaked with tremulous lines of white, that tell of rushing waters.

No sound of living thing is there, save the cry of the muir-fowl startled by our approach from their sanctuary in the rich blossoming heather ; yet there was once an awesome night when these rocks echoed the shouts of warriors, and the cries of the dying ; and a great boulder of red rock, known as "the Bloody Stane," still marks the spot where a fierce battle was fought by the MacAllisters, the Macdonalds, and the MacLeods, whose lands still meet at this very spot, so each clan buried its dead on its own ground. This it is which makes the place so eerie in the moonlight, for, as every Highlander knows, the fairies fashion their bows and arrows from the ribs of men buried where the lands of three lairds meet.

Many a fierce clan-feud have these silent hills witnessed, as some still testify by the names they bear. Thus one dark spur overhanging Corruisk is known as Strona Stree, or the Hill of Strife, the possession of its bare and rugged crags having been hotly contested by jealous chiefs. And at the back of this range lies the Corry-na-Crieach, or Corry of the Fight, a deep, dark gorge, where the MacLeods surprised the Macdonalds in the act of dividing the spoil gathered in a foray on their own homes. Then followed quick revenge, and the red rocks were dyed of a deeper hue with the life-blood of many a sturdy clansman.

In some of the marshy pools in these valleys we found a very rare, but very ugly plant growing abundantly, namely, the jointed pipewort,<sup>1</sup> so called because of its stalk being jointed and set at seven or eight angles ; its roots are coral-like. The plant is indigenous to North America, and its only British homes are at this spot, the neighbouring Isle of Coll, and a few small islets near.

<sup>1</sup> *The Eriocaulon septangulare.*

It is also found at Connemara in Ireland. To botanists its rarity makes its existence here a point of considerable interest, otherwise its insignificance would fail to attract notice.

The expeditions to Corruisk always involved a stiff day's work, generally of twelve hours, of which eight were spent on the road, going and returning. Moreover, it was such a road as was not pleasant after dusk, even for such sure-footed ponies as those we rode, so that we always had reluctantly to leave off work just when the lights were most beautiful; and our faithful, sturdy gillie, Donald, took good care that we should not outstay what he considered the right time. The height of artistic pleasure would be to visit Corruisk with such a tent as that in which I spent the following summer, amid loftier, but scarcely more beautiful mountains.<sup>1</sup>

Our homeward ride was always a delight, as we watched every changing effect of sunset and gloaming pass over beautiful Blaven and its dark brethren. There was something eerie in the companionship of our own shadows, lying right across the valley, on the opposite hillside, as if some silent Spirit of the Mountain were haunting our footsteps. Sometimes they fell far below us, and rested in ghostly stillness on the white vapours that lay there, hushed in deathlike silence, motionless as "the mist that sleeps on a waveless sea." And far overhead the solemn mountains towered, —the red cones of Marskow and Glamaig, glowing ruddier and more golden in the light of the setting sun, and Blaven rearing his dark crest against a pale green sky—a marvellous confused mass of crags, ashy-grey as the heron's wing, and cutting black in strange serrated outline against the clear frosty heaven.

Many a time since then have the words of the "city poet"<sup>2</sup> come floating back to my mind, with the same great longing once more to return to that beautiful wild valley—

"O wonderful mountain of Blaven !  
How oft since our parting hour  
You have roar'd with the wintry torrents,  
You have gloom'd through the thunder-shower.

---

<sup>1</sup> The Himalayas.

<sup>2</sup> Alexander Smith.

O Blaven, rocky Blaven !  
How I long to be with you again.  
To see lash'd gulf and gully  
Smoke white in the windy rain.  
To see in the scarlet sunrise  
The mist-wreaths perish with heat,  
The wet rock slide with a trickling gleam  
Right down to the cataract's feet ;  
While toward the crimson islands,  
Where the sea-birds flutter and skirl, †  
A cormorant flaps o'er a sleek ocean floor  
Of tremulous mother-of-pearl."

It was always an amusing lottery, on returning in the evening to the little inn, to ascertain who were the fresh arrivals, as many of our Southern friends came there for a few days, and looked upon a chance meeting in Skye much as if we had met in Kamschatka.

I had been fortunate in securing a tiny attic which possessed the only window with a view of the Cuchullins, so I could see them at all hours and seasons, in beautiful moonlight, and before dawn. Then when I saw a clear pale sky, I knew what was coming, and went away down the shore of the little bay, to watch the fiery finger touch the peaks, while their perfect image lay mirrored at my feet in the calm sea-loch. Gradually the fire spread, till the whole mass gleamed crimson in the clear frosty air, and the cloudless sky was a faint lemon-colour, and deep purple shadows lay on the brown peat-moss. By the time that all this beauty had faded to the "light of common day," it was time to feel how chilling was the air, and turn breakfastward, with some compassion for the sleepers, who came so far in search of beauty, and invariably missed the cream of it.

It is only by letting these varied aspects of the hills sink through your eyes into your imagination, that you really get into the spirit of the place, and of those remote days when Cuchullin and Diarmid, Ossian and Fingal dwelt among these wilds, with their beautiful wives, and stalwart sons and daughters, brave vassals and trusty hounds, whose adventures in chase and war have been the theme of the islemen ever since. Gradually they

have taken colour from the poetic imaginations of a people nurtured among stormy mountains and dreary moorlands—wild mists and rocks, with wilder seas around—the legends becoming more and more shadowy and weird as they were transmitted from one generation to another, till sea-foam and drifting vapour—wraiths and spirits of earth, sea, and air, became so interwoven with each heroic deed, and the whole so magnified by the mists of ages, that they have taken the form of dreamy legends. Such legends as those of Ossian, whose first appearance in the civilized world occasioned a turmoil among men who had not cared to note for themselves, how the commonest story of the present day becomes fraught with poetic imagery when heard from the lips of these untutored children of the mist; keenly sensitive as they are to all spiritual influences, whether of faith or of mere superstition. A people, moreover, who, from the dawn of life, always live more or less in memory of the “steadfast doom of death;”—whose chief anxiety is to stint themselves of luxuries during life, that they may provide fair linen for their winding-sheet, and a funeral feast for those who shall carry them to their grave.

One of the legends of these Red Hills tells of a strange burial on one of these misty summits, which bears the name of Ben-na-Cailliach, the mountain of the aged woman. For, just as the old granite-faced pyramids of the East received the ashes of mighty kings, so this great, bare pyramid of unhewn red granite is sacred to the memory of an old Viking's daughter, whose spirit could not brook to sleep beneath green turf, so she bade her people carry her to the top of the mountain “that she might sleep right in the pathway of the Norway wind.” It was a hard task, and a steep and difficult ascent, but the command of the dead must be obeyed. So there they laid her, alone in the starlight, and the wild winds and storms have for long ages raved and battled around that lonely cairn.

The love of the bleak north land seems ever to have retained its hold on the hearts of such of its sons and daughters as were drawn southward. The north of Skye has its tradition of how an invading Norwegian force became so friendly with the Skye men, that

they invited the island chief to sail back to Norway with them, which he did, and there wooed and won the king's daughter, who returned to Skye as his bride. But the love of home was too strong, and in her ceaseless yearning for the land she had forsaken, she drooped and died. But with her latest breath, she bade her lord promise that she should be buried at the northern point of Stronveualin with her face raised, looking towards Norway.

You will find numerous cairns as you wander over these steep hill-paths, each one marking where some funeral procession has halted; for many a long and weary tramp will the Highlanders take, sooner than suffer the dead to be laid in unloved ground, and all alike have the same longing to be buried at the old home, and sleep with kindred dust. So when a man dies, his old Bible and dirk, blue bonnet and plaid, are laid on his coffin, and his friends gather round, while a few last words of reverent prayer are uttered; then, shouldering their heavy burden, they start for the far-away kirkyard, while the wild pibroch echoes through the misty hills. (In olden days it would have been the wilder coronach, but this is now a memory of the past, and I grieve to say that even the pibrochs are being fast silenced by modern bigotry.) At every spot where the coffin has rested, a cairn of loose stones is heaped up, and each future passer-by is expected to add a stone in reverence for the dead.

Strangely enough, such cairns also mark the spot where malefactors have perished, or have been buried, and each passer-by flings a stone in token of abhorrence of their crime, or, as some folks say, to appease the unquiet spirit, which the old Celts believed was doomed to hover near the unhallowed spot. Whichever is the true meaning, the custom is still kept up. It is curious to remember that in Egypt, Syria, Ceylon, and some other lands, cairns are likewise heaped, with strangely diverse meaning—either in honourable memory of the dead, or in abhorrence of some evil action. The difference seems to be, that in the former case the stone is laid carefully, in the latter it is thrown contemptuously.

Such a funeral procession as I have described, you may chance to see winding its way through these wild glens towards Skeabost,

where a rocky river runs between low, green hills into a blue sea-loch, both bearing the same name—Snizort. On an island in the stream stands just such a ruined kirk as those in Mull and Cantyre, with the same old carved stones and rank grass—old knights with their swords, mossy inscriptions, some stones broken, others upheaved. The place was known in olden days as “ Sanct Colm’s kirk in Sneshurd, in Trouterness.” It is a bonnie resting-place; but the frequent influx of new sleepers, and the rushing and babbling of the divided waters, take away from the perfect peace and silence—and the feeling of being alone with generations long since forgotten, which lend such a charm to those quiet tombs among the green bent hills.

There is no bridge to connect the island with the banks of the river, so the funeral processions from either side of the country must ford the stream, and sometimes they find it in spate, and have to wait for hours—it may be days—before they can lay their clansman beneath the sod. Happily they are rarely in any hurry, and as they find no lack of creature comforts in the tidy village, the usual approved method of keeping up their spirits is rarely neglected! Nor need we wonder if, returning from the little inn through the gloaming or in the moonlight, strange eerie tales gather round the Island of the Dead—of weird phantoms riding on dark storm-clouds, or bright spirits on the moonbeam, connecting it with the World of Shadow.

Numerous as are these ancient burial-grounds, they are not all held in equal favour. In Easter Ross, for instance, where every green bay along the coast has its quiet kirkyard beside the sea, though the old church itself has generally mouldered away, you will notice a strange predominance of very small graves, and may naturally suppose that child-life in Ross-shire is at an unusually low ebb. The truth of the matter is, that some peculiar sanctity is attached by the people to the kirkyard of Nigg, to which they will carry their dead from distances of forty miles, and the little graves by the lone sea-side are for the most part those of unbaptized children, who are not deemed worthy to be carried so far, or laid beside Christian dust in the much-esteemed ground of Nigg.

This, however, implies a superstitious reverence for baptism which a genuine Highlander will indignantly disclaim; only in the strictest confidence would such a confession be unwillingly made.

The implied disrespect to the poor babies reminds me of a speech made by the old grave-digger at Nairn, in a year of sad mortality among the little ones. A friend seeing him at work asked, "Weel, John, hae ye had a gude season?" "Hoot na!" was the answer; "just a heap of sma' trash!" You perceive that being paid so much per foot for his work, his profits varied with the stature of all comers.

Happily for the survivors, the old customs of extravagant funeral feasts are now well-nigh among the things of the past. Such feasting, for instance, as has been recorded at the funeral of one of the Lords of the Isles in Iona, when nine hundred cows, each valued at three marks, were consumed! Or that of Sir William Hamilton, which cost £5000, equal to two years of his salary as Lord Justice Clerk. Or, again, that of the Mackintosh, in 1704, when cooks and confectioners were brought from Edinburgh—no easy matter in those days—and extravagant feasting was continued for a whole month, waiting the arrival of the chief mourner, who had to be sought and found in the south of England. Indeed one account says that the body lay in state at Dalcross Castle for upwards of two months, during which open house, in the widest acceptation of the term, was kept, claret flowing incessantly! When at length the funeral day arrived, the procession extended for four miles, the first man having reached the churchyard of Petty before the last had left the castle!

Such profusion marks the same strange law of hospitality which forbade a Highland chief to question his unbidden guest as to his business until the expiration of a year, should he choose to stop so long. Hence the Gaelic sentence which describes the house of a chief as "the point to which the road of every stranger leads." Not that the chief had any monopoly of this unbounded liberality. The poorest of these islanders were so ready to entertain strangers and load them with the best they had to give, that in olden days we hear of unprincipled persons from the mainland frequenting the

Hebrides for no other purpose than that of sponging on their neighbours; and when the first householder whom they honoured with a visit had been eaten out of house and home, he took them on to his next neighbour, where they remained and repeated the process.

Perhaps the quaintest illustration of a hospitable board literally groaning under the weight of good things heaped upon it, was a great dinner given to Argyle by M'Eachin, in Cantyre, whereat every creature he could possibly lay hands on, was roasted whole and set on the table "standing on its stumps!" There was an ox, a goat, a sheep, a stag, a roe, hares, rabbits, and all manner of poultry, and many another good thing, cooked in such fashion as might well have given Soyer a dream of Bedlam!

At length the sad day came, when we were compelled to bid adieu to beautiful Skye—its mountains, and its kindly people. We took the coach to dreary Broadford, where visitors are now landed by steamers from Strome Ferry, the new railway terminus. Just imagine the snorting iron horses having found their way even to these wilds (solitudes no longer), and making those grand misty summits echo back their hideous shriek and whistle. The poet's nightmare of seeing a railway "bridge the Hebrides" has well-nigh been rendered a vulgar fact, and his wail over the great Saxon invasion keeps ringing in our ears—

"Land of Bens and Glens and Corries,  
 Headlong rivers, ocean floods!  
 Have we lived to see this outrage  
 On your haughty solitudes?  
 . . . . .  
 Strange to them the train—but stranger  
 The mixed throng it bubbles forth,  
 Strand and Piccadilly emptied  
 On the much-enduring North!"

All of which is very fine theoretically; but practically it must be confessed that a luxurious railway *coupé* has *some* advantages over a crowded coach; and as to our brethren of the city, I only hope they may all carry away as sunny memories of Skye as have



clung to me. To them above all others, the four-and-twenty hours which transport them from the heart of London to the farthest limits of these wild hills should be a concentrated essence of delight—and no British railway could possibly lie through scenes more beautiful than does the new Skye line.

The old folk will tell you that the railway is no new idea to them, for, just as the making of the Caledonian Canal had long been foretold by seers, who beheld ships with great white sails passing to and fro, where other men could see only broom and heather,—so, more than two hundred years ago, Coignoch Oig, the prophet of Brahan in Ross-shire (many of whose prophecies have already been strangely verified), foretold that a day was coming when every stream in this wild region would be bridged, when a white house should stand on every hill, and balls of fire would pass rapidly up and down Strathpeffer !

More especially, for the last thirty years have they expected the railway, for it was about that time, “just thirty years syne,” that the folk travelling by the coach, between Loch Carron and Strome Ferry (by the old road, which ran very near where the railway now goes), were startled one dark winter night by seeing a great light coming towards them, and as it drew nearer they saw that it was a huge dark coach with fiery lamps—they could see no horses ; only a great glare of flames and sparks, and it rushed past them at a place where there was no road, and vanished among the mountains. After this, the mysterious coach was seen at frequent intervals for two or three years—till at last the coachman could no longer stand the constant strain on his nerves, and gave up running at night.

This is the story that you may hear from any old “*cailliach*” as she sits in the gloaming, crooning her old songs by the light of the red peat fire, or spinning her endless yarns to the group of bare-legged and bare-armed lassies, whose bright eyes glitter in the ruddy light as they press around her, or cling closer one to another, as the interest of the story becomes more thrilling. Presently the lads will join them, for the day’s work is done, and “e’en brings a’ hame” to the pleasant fireside.

And already we look back to “the cld coaching days” as to a

dream of the past ! Yet there are people still living who remember when the coaches first began to run regularly north of Aberdeen, and what a grand thing *that* was thought ! Nay, more ; there are many gentlemen who can vividly recollect going from here to London in a sailing smack, as the simplest and least troublesome route. How often I have heard my father describe such voyages, and the annoyance of being becalmed for days together ! Then came the coasting steamers ; a grand improvement, and many a merry run we have had in them between London and Moray. Now all these are things of the past. You breakfast one morning in sight of the great Skye hills, and the next finds you at Euston Square—a process so simple, that life becomes one incessant railway journey, for ever whirling to and fro !

On the present occasion, we were not oppressed by the encroachments of civilization. Our route lay by Kyle Akin, or Kyle Hakin (the Straits of Haco), where we had to cross Loch Alsh by ferry. Happily the weather was calm and dry, else the crossing in a small open boat might have been unpleasant. The scramble of young natives to secure a fair share of our luggage and our coin was something startling to behold, in Britain.

Close to Kyle Akin are the ruins of Castle Moil, an old square keep, whose solid and substantial walls seem to form part of the rock on which they stand, overhanging the water. It was built by the daughter of a Norwegian king (or, some say, by a Scottish dame, known as Saucy Mary), who exacted a toll from all vessels passing through the Kyles ; and kept a strong chain stretched from shore to shore as a toll-bar, the chain being fastened with iron rings to the rocks on either side.

We drove on *viâ* Balmacarra and Loch Alsh till we reached Dornie Ferry, where, with one honourable exception (and he was an American), we found every man connected with the ferry hopelessly drunk, in honour of a cattle show. Some were surly ; some were cheery ; others helplessly imbecile, having attained the same pleasant stage as that worthy Londoner, who, returning home at an advanced hour of the morning “shlightly shober,” plumed himself on being particularly early, having passed the great tower of West-

minster just as Big Ben was striking one, and what was more, "*it had struck one sheveral times*"!

Being thus forcibly detained, we consoled ourselves by sketching the old castle of Eilean Donan, which stands on an island in Loch Duich. It was built on the site of an old vitrified fort, by Alexander II., to overawe the Danes and Norwegians; and the first constable of the castle was one Kenneth Matheson, whose

#### CASTLE OF EILEAN DONAN.

descendants were known as MacKennich, the sons of Kenneth. Hence sprang the Mackenzies of Seaforth. Since then the old castle has been twice consumed and twice rebuilt. In the last instance it was taken for Prince Charlie by a farmer who held that all stratagems are fair in love and war. So he feigned sore distress at the prospect of stormy weather, and induced the governor to lend him some hands to help in rapidly garnering the harvest. No

cloud on the political sky threatened danger in that quarter, and the unwary governor sent a detachment of his men to turn their swords into sickles. In their absence, a strong body of Kintail men surprised the enfeebled remnant, and captured their stronghold.

Then the last Earl of Seaforth rallied all the men of Kintail to fight in the Stuart cause, and as the pipes struck up their heart-stirring notes, the enthusiasm knew no bounds, and the crags around re-echoed the wild shouts that rose, as one and all started up to dance on the old leaden roof, ere they went forth to join the Prince. That defiant war-dance was the last merry-making of these brave lads. A few days later, a wail of grief and woe resounded from every hill and valley, for news of battle and of defeat had been brought by the foe, who came to burn the castle (A.D. 1719), and to tell how that gallant band had shed their hearts' blood for their King on Sherrifmuir.

When we had waited fully a couple of hours, our American friend thought some of his men might be made to work ; and though they presented the lively appearance of inebriated owls, they made a start ; and under pressure of startlingly strong language, did succeed in getting across. It was, however, 10 p.m. before we reached Shiel House Inn, which stands at the head of Loch Duich—a blue sea loch—fringed with golden sea-weed. The house is a pleasant one to halt at. Behind it rise the Seven Sisters of Kintail, a group of grassy, cone-shaped hills, bearing so strong a family likeness as to have earned this name. Next day we had a lovely walk up Mam Rataghan, to see the sun set once more behind the far distant Cuchullins, and as we turned to descend, a wondrous effect of storm and rainbow swept over the peaks of Kintail.

About a mile from Shiel House is a subterranean cave, close to the road, into which (if you are curious to see what was probably the dwelling of some old Pict) you may crawl. Once inside, you will find a chamber eight feet high, paved and lined with large flag-stones, and with a stone roof of long slabs, resting on cross rafters, also of stone.

We greatly regretted not having left a day to see the Falls of

Glomak, by far the highest in Scotland, and within a very beautiful ride of Glen Shiel. However, we were bound to push onwards to lovely Glen Quoich, where the pleasant weeks slipped by all too quickly. Very charming were the long glorious days on dark Loch Hourn, and pleasant too the social evenings in the sunniest of sunny homes, when the deer-stalkers and fishers returned in the gloaming to tell of their day's sport, and to dream away happy hours in a paradise of roses and fair women, lulled by melodious voices, which seemed to glide away on each moonlight ripple, as the tiny wavelets of the blue loch plashed against the trim, well-mown lawn

## GLEN QUOICH.

A beautiful drive down Glen Garry brought us to old Invergarry Castle, and so to Fort Augustus, still called by the Highlanders Kill Chuimein, in memory of that Cuming the Fair who twelve hundred years ago held the bishopric of the Isles as seventh Bishop of Iona, but known to the Sassenach only by the name of the grey old fort, which has so recently been demolished, that on its site might be erected a new Roman Catholic college.

Thence taking passage by the steamer, we sailed up beautiful

Loch Ness, taking a farewell look at Castle Urquhart, once an old holding of the Clan Cumming, and in later days one of the royal forts of Scotland, besieged by Edward I. in 1303. Many a hard tussle with the English did it witness, but for the last three hundred years there has been no mention of it in any chronicle of fight or fray. It is now a picturesque ruin, rising from the loch on a rocky promontory.

The Highlanders call these grey ruins Strone Castle, and believe that two mysterious vaulted cells are hollowed in the rock below. The one contains a countless treasure of gold ; but in the other a fearful pestilence is sealed up, which, if once released, would stalk forth in irresistible might and depopulate the land, having first slain the rash hand that opened its prison door. So the dread of liberating so dire a scourge has even subdued the covetous craving for gold, and the treasure-chamber remains inviolate.

A few hours later found us once more in the capital of the Highlands, and the thought of our six months in the Hebrides was even as the memory of a pleasant dream.







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